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**REALISING THE GEO/GRAPHIC LANDSCAPE
OF THE EVERYDAY:**

**A PRACTICE LED INVESTIGATION INTO
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY GEO/GRAPHIC
DESIGN PROCESS**

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of the Arts London

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The CD at the rear of the thesis also contains PDF files of each of the design test projects.

Abstract

This research proposes that the ‘geo/graphic’ design process—an original synthesis of cultural geographic and graphic design theory and practice—offers much to geographers and graphic designers in relation to the understanding and representation of place, and the potential of print based graphic design to create interactive, multi-linear spaces of exploration for the reader.

The understanding and representation of place is a central issue within cultural geography, with place itself a complex notion defined in contemporary geographic terms as ongoing and relational. This problematises both understanding and representation, as places, in a sense, are never ‘fixed’. Addressing this, and the contention that much of place evades representation, many geographers have begun to use methods that site the researcher, and their understanding, in more embodied, experiential ways within place, and are drawing on ‘creative’ methods such as film-making or sound recording. Yet, the predominant representation of place within geography remains the academic text, with few attempts to explore the communicative possibilities of type and image in this context. So, the pages of academic journals remain conventional, though research methods develop in multi-sensory ways. This research bridges the apparent divide between methods of exploring and representing place, and in doing so positions the graphic designer as researcher and develops a process that engages with the understanding and representation of place in a holistic way. Foregrounding graphic design practice, it highlights design interventions that re-situate the page as an experiential place.

A qualitative, naturalistic and reflective methodological approach is taken, drawing on social science methods and design practice. Ethnographic methods inspire a series of print based design test projects, each conveying a particular version of the London borough of Hackney—the testing ground for the research. Analysis of the design test projects, establishes key elements of the research and practice, thus articulating the specifics of the ‘geo/graphic’ design process.

Key words: graphic design, typography, cultural geography, place, representation, geo/graphic design process

Introduction

0.1 Motivation, methods and main questions: An outline of the research

This research stems from a belief that the practice of print based graphic design can offer a great deal to cultural geographic practices and theories relating to the understanding and representation of place. The representation of everyday life and place is seen to be problematic within cultural geography both because of the subjective nature of the researcher's experience and the theory that much of one's experience of place resists capture—it is 'more than representational' (Lorimer 2005). In recent years qualitative research methods within social science, and therefore cultural geography, have broadened to include those that explore and understand place through more experiential, embodied methods. However, such methods have had little impact in the dissemination of such research, and the predominant vehicle remains the traditional academic journal article, with little thought for how type or image could aid in the representation and understanding of place. It would seem that there is a separation between the experimental 'practice' of the research methods and the predominantly conventional representations of the 'theory' within the pages of journals.

Some cultural geographers have undertaken collaborations with artists in order to further develop methods through which one can understand and represent place and geographical processes, though collaboration with graphic design seems to have been overlooked. Perhaps this is because the perception of design is that it exists primarily within the commercial world, therefore its role is a subservient one, incapable of offering the kind of 'creative insights' that art might. However, designers are used to bridging the divide between written content and visual representation, and many designers and design companies are developing bodies of self-generated, exploratory work—for example, Sam Winston's book and typographic work, and Tomato's (1996, 1999) publications (figs. 1–3). Such work is not developed by the designer suddenly shaking off some kind of constraint in their approach in favour of 'art', but continues to use what is termed 'the design process' to develop the work. This is a flexible, iterative, recursive, and progressive process that could be likened to a process of analysis. Because of this similarity, the designer's decisions can be clearly articulated, and in a sense 'validated', therefore the process offers a useful transparency. It also offers transferability, as the process of graphic design cannot be undertaken until one has content, and that content can be anything at all because the design process is generic in nature and is, therefore,



Fig. 1 Sam Winston (2001)
Dictionary Story, in *Grafik*,
October 2007, p 45



Fig. 2 Sam Winston (2006)
New York Times illustration,
in *Grafik*, October 2007, p 55

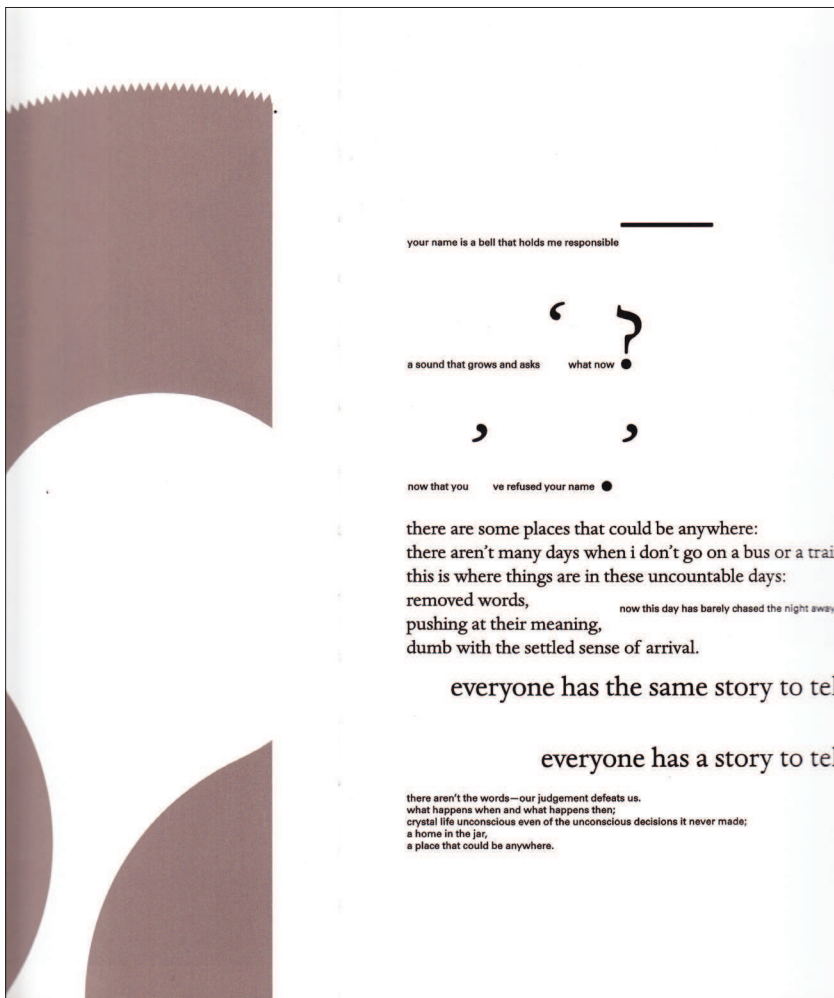


Fig. 3 Sample page (no pagination), in
Tomato, (1999), *Bareback. A Tomato Project*,
London, Laurence King

inherently adaptable. The transparency and transferability of the design process, and its similarity to the process of analysis that drives research generally, highlights a creative process that cultural geographers could use productively within work that seeks to understand and communicate the ongoing production of place.

This interdisciplinary practice-led research draws on my own understanding of graphic design practice; continues to develop my understanding and interest in cultural geography that was established through previous research (see Barnes 2006, 2007, and Bestley & Noble 2005); and, works creatively between the two fields. However, within the context of cultural geographic theories, it is the untapped possibilities in relation to the understanding, interpretation and communication of everyday life and place through graphic design thinking and graphic design interventions, that drive this research.

The research also draws on, what could be broadly termed, ethnographic research methods in order to develop an understanding of place. The London borough of Hackney is defined as the testing ground of this research—chosen because of its diversity and because of relatively recent negative perceptions in the national media. However, the ultimate aim of the research is to develop a geo/graphic design process that is not specific to one particular site, but one that is adaptable and transferable, and therefore can respond equally well to very different situations. Therefore a variety of design test projects have been undertaken in order to explore different methods in relation to experiencing, understanding, and articulating place.

The analysis of the completed design test projects provides the evidence needed to address the central research questions—can print based graphic design be profitably utilised within geographic debates about the understanding and representation of place, and what might constitute a 'geo/graphic' design process? Through these central concerns, other inextricably linked questions are also addressed. For example; is it possible to work 'at the level of the text' in order to explore typography as a 'generative structure of meanings' (Mermoz 2002: 1); is the page truly incapable of revealing a sense of place and has the text been 'silenced' since the advent of mechanical print (Ingold 2007); and, can the multi-sensory nature of print offer the reader an interactive experience that matches, or perhaps even goes beyond that which is offered by film or new media?

0.2 Defining the term 'geo/graphic'

Before any further discussion of the research I should clarify the context with which I have coined, and am using, the term 'geo/graphic'. I do not see it as a neologism, for I am not intending it to offer a new sense of an existing word. A literal translation of the word geography is earth writings, coming from the Latin roots of geo—earth, and graphy—writing. By taking the word geographic and inserting a forward slash between the two elements of the whole word I wanted to re-emphasise its constituent parts—geo and graphic. Graphic these days is perhaps associated more with pictures than with words and, as a graphic designer, graphic also obviously relates to my 'home' research territory. This shifts the interplay of meaning to a more visual perspective, enabling the productive utilisation of graphic design thinking and practice within the process, and points towards the interdisciplinary nature of the study. The use of a forward slash as opposed to a hyphen was a particular choice. It has been described as a character that can perform this simultaneous 'division and doubling', and 'hint at meaning that is not quite there yet' (Springgay, Irwin & Wilson Kind, 2005: 904). However, the slash doesn't allow limitless interpretations in relation to these new meanings.

It is the tension provoked by this doubling, between limit/less that maintains meaning's possibility... The slash suggests movements or shifts between the terms... The slash makes the terms active, relational, as they reverberate with, in, and through each other (Springgay, Irwin & Wilson Kind, 2005: 904).

The angle of the forward slash perhaps allows for this movement, each word seems to move both towards and away from the other, creating an interactive coupling, with the slash acting as a fulcrum or pivot.

The interdisciplinary nature of this research is framed within chapter three as being in a position of 'inbetweenness' (Cocker 2008: 1), and the use of a forward slash also highlights this between space as a productive new place to be found between the disciplines of geography and graphic design—bringing to bear the graphic designer's subject specific perspective on the understanding and representation of everyday life and place. The space created by the slash could also be seen as a kind of fold, with graphics and geography folding into and around each other.

Folding holds out the potential to diversify endlessly without falling into the logic of binary oppositions. This sense of the fold thinks of matter as doubling back upon itself to make endless new points of connection between diverse elements (Meskimmon 2003 in Springgay et al 2005: 901)

To that end, I also make use of the forward slash in order to reconfigure the context of the word representation. Re/presentation, in relation to the research and practice articulated within this thesis, emphasises both 're' and 'presentation' and again creates a productive interplay that enables one to move beyond the idea of the mimetic with regard to an image of place. The separation of 're' enables its root meaning of 'anew' or 'afresh' to be highlighted, but it also perhaps opens up the sense that the research is 'about' ideas and possibilities of presentation itself. This particular division and doubling articulates the design test projects as re/presentations that offer the potential of a new reading of place through each reader's engagement, but it is a re/presentation that still utilises many of the traditional graphic aspects of presentation within its execution. The word 'representation' is still used within the thesis, but in reference to traditional academic texts that remain the predominant form of research dissemination, and as a collective noun for geographic representations in general.

0.3 The structure of the thesis

The thesis opens by framing the geo/graphic design process within the relevant research literature, drawn from cultural geography, anthropology, ethnography, and graphic design. Firstly, clarification of the use of the terms 'place' and 'everyday life' within the context of this research is offered. Cultural geographic perspectives are then discussed in relation to methods of exploring and understanding place; notions of the map; the 'crisis of representation' and non-representational theory; and, methodological collaboration with artists, and the development of new research methods. The chapter then turns its focus to graphic design, and in his discussion of the 'silencing' of language on the page, through the advent of mechanical print, anthropologist Tim Ingold makes an analogy between page and map that draws the fields of geography and graphic design together. In the sections that follow, graphic design is positioned as a practice that is often polarised by debates concerning issues such as style and substance, and Modernism and Postmodernism. Finally, Mermoz's

(1995, 1998, 2000, 2002 and Mau & Mermoz 2004) writings are cited as an attempt to move graphic design beyond these simplistic, polarised debates, and provide the theoretical impetus to develop typographic work that not only gives ‘voice’ to the page, but also offers cultural geographers an insight into the communicative potential of graphic and typographic interventions within written representations of place.

Chapter two positions the research through an analysis of practice. Drawn predominantly from graphic design, the work is discussed in relation to key issues explored within the literature review. These two chapters position the research within a historical and contemporary interdisciplinary context and begin to highlight central areas of investigation for the development of the geo/graphic design process. The methodological framework for the development of the geo/graphic design process is discussed in chapter three, which outlines the qualitative, naturalistic, and reflective approach taken throughout the research. The strategy is that of the bricoleur, employing a multi-method approach that has been specifically chosen, within the context and perspective of graphic design practice, to reflect aspects of the study, and be flexible and responsive enough to react to new opportunities and shifts in thinking that occur as the research unfolds. In chapter four the reasons for the choice of the London Borough of Hackney as the research testing ground are briefly outlined, along with a visual and textual introduction to the borough drawn from my own research and from participants’ cultural probe returns. Whilst this is not an example of the geo/graphic design process, it does enable the reader to explore the complexity and simultaneity of place and avoids using a traditional ‘fixed’ description of the research site that would be inappropriate given the approach to, and definition of, place used within the research.

The design test projects are briefly introduced in chapter five, and chapters six, seven and eight analyse the development of the design test projects in relation to methods used to gain an understanding of place; the role of analysis and reflection within place and practice; and, the place of design. These chapters give the thesis a thematic structure. However, if one wishes to navigate the thesis via the design test projects, the following matrix enables one to do this.

	Ch 5 Introduction	Ch 6 Research methods	Ch 7 Methods of analysis	Ch 8 Design methods	Ch 9 Conclusions
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Hackney Conversations	185–187	209–210	233, 235, 265–266	274–275, 282–283, 313–314, 330–333	342, 344
Type cast participative maps	187–190	218–223	233		
Stuff	190–193	216–218, 223–224	253–254, 264	274–275, 276–277, 279–281, 283, 289–291, 293–295, 298–300, 304, 306–312, 313–314, 317–320, 324, 328, 335	348, 351
Freecycle	193–195		244–249	274–275, 289, 302–305, 313–315	
Newsagents' windows	196–200	209–210	229–230, 233	274–6, 278, 284–289	342, 344
Old Town	200–202	210–212, 223–224	244–245, 249, 251	322, 324–329	342, 344
A Haptic Journey	200–2002	210–212	244–245, 249–250	276, 313–314, 316, 328–329	
Food Miles	202–204	209–210, 212–213, 215–216, 223–224	229–230, 233–234, 244–245, 252–253, 261–264	276–277, 280, 282–283, 289–290, 292–293, 295–298, 301–302, 304, 306, 320–324, 328	342, 344–345

Finally, the conclusion centres on discussion of how the research has reframed both my practice and my understanding of place; the limitations and implications of the research; and, its further possibilities. The final articulation of the geo/graphic design process and a set of criteria with which to evaluate it are contained within the appendix.

What underpins this research throughout is a productive synthesis of both theory and practice, undertaken within the interdisciplinary territory that is formed within the intersection of graphic design and cultural geography. The following chapter draws out the key theoretical issues from both disciplines that begin to clarify the parameters and aims of this research study—starting with two contrasting definitions of place.

1

**Positioning the geo/graphic design process
within appropriate research literature**

This interdisciplinary, practice-led research centres on the geographic visual representation of urban space and the possibilities graphic design can bring to that process. The practice undertaken is within the context of print-based graphic design, as this is my area of specialism. Also, despite recent methodological developments, printed academic journals remain the primary vehicle for disseminating cultural geographic understandings and representations of everyday life and place. Therefore examples of existing research discussed in the thesis will focus on the problems and possibilities of print from the perspectives of both cultural geography and graphic design. Graphic designers foresaw ‘the end of print’ through the advent of new media and, although some geographers are exploring the communicative capacity of language through creative writing, very few seem to have realised that the design of the text on the page has potential in relation to understanding and articulating place. Indeed, many of the recent methodological innovations within cultural geography prefer to relinquish the printed word altogether, and centre on the potential of methods such as film or sound with which to explore and understand place. This research proposes that print is not ‘dead’—that it offers the potential, through graphic design and typography, to produce artefacts that offer the reader a temporal, interactive, multi-linear experience that is in keeping with contemporary conceptualisations of place, and the methodological approaches of contemporary cultural geography.

As this research is interdisciplinary, it naturally touches on a broad range of issues, and some—place and everyday life for example—clearly cannot be discussed in the depth that a different type of study might merit. However, the central theme of this research is the representation of place and everyday life, therefore the opening section gives the reader an understanding of the concepts of place and everyday life used within the course of this research. The chapter continues with a discussion of the impact of postmodern and poststructuralist thinking on the interpretation of place and everyday life and the role different types of narratives have in constructing ‘place image’. The practice of walking is highlighted as a method for exploring place, both from a historical, artistic perspective and a contemporary cultural geographic one. The discussion of the visual representation of place begins with the most traditional of geographic visual formats—the map—and the problems entailed within it. It then charts the disciplinary shift from this scientific perspective, through the issues brought to the fore during both the ‘cultural turn’ and the ‘crisis of

representation'. The final section of the geographic discussion centres on artistic collaborations and methodological expansiveness with regard to the exploration and representation of place and everyday life.

The chapter continues by turning its focus to graphic design and typography. Design is positioned as having the potential to create 'spaces of interpretation', but that potential is seen by some outside design to be compromised by the advent of mechanical print and, from within design, by an over reliance on superficial style. However, style is revealed as content too and the chapter continues with many of the following themes paralleling those discussed with respect to geography and cartography in the first half of the chapter, with the perceived neutrality of modernism, being overtaken by the postmodern, poststructuralist perspective, particularly in typography. Finally an approach that focuses on the holistic use of form and content is offered as a way to move beyond simplistic stylistic approaches and the non-productive binary oppositions of Modernism and Postmodernism. The conclusion suggests that a synthesis of the ideas and practice contained in this chapter offers an opportunity to probe place from the viewpoint of the graphic designer through the geo/graphic design process. This offers a new geo/graphic perspective for the exploration and representation of place, and uses the design of the page in a proactive way to communicate this. However, I should make it clear at the outset, that the aim of the geo/graphic design process is not to search for and represent some kind of 'truth' that can be discovered beneath the 'surface' of place, for place itself is a complex proposition that inevitably resists such attempts.

1.1 Defining place

Aside from its simple definition of 'a meaningful location' (Cresswell 2004: 7), place is one of the most complex ideas within human geography. Agnew (1987 in Castree 2003: 155) offers three principal meanings of the term: place as location; a sense of place; and, place as locale. These can be further defined as 'a specific point on the earth's surface', 'the subjective feelings people have about places, including the role of places in their individual and group identity' and 'a setting and scale for people's daily actions and interactions' (Castree 2003: 155). Modern geographical notions of place have been debated and developed since the 1970s and were prompted by the emergence of humanistic geographers who rejected the postwar scientific and quantitative approach (Castree 2003: 157). Humanist

geographers emphasised the particularity of place experience rather than seeking overarching similarities and patterns. For example, Tuan describes this specificity of place as ‘made up of experiences, mostly fleeting’ and being a ‘unique blend of sights, sounds, and smells’ (2007: 183) and likens place to pauses (2007: 6). The pauses enable us to know place better and inscribe our own meanings and value onto it, to develop a ‘feel’ of a place ‘in one’s muscles and bones’ (Tuan 2007: 198). Humanist geographers such as Tuan replaced the law-finding nomothetic approach with the ideographic search for uniqueness of place, or its ‘genius loci’ (Crang 1998: 101). However, during the 1970s, the development of a global economy led Marxist geographers to argue that places were both interconnected and interdependent, and therefore these global connections between places were deemed more important than differences (Castree 2003: 158–9). Globalisation also began to be seen as a force that homogenized place, for example, high streets that began to offer identikit experiences thanks to brands such as Starbucks and McDonalds. The Humanistic and Marxist approaches essentially position the notion of the local as diametrically opposed to the global.

However, geographers such as Doreen Massey have developed conceptions of place that connect the local and the global, and offer ‘a global sense of the local’ (Massey 1994: 51 see also Pickles 2004: 191) that allows us to view places as both interconnected and unique. Here, the world is thought of in terms of networks and flows that link ‘any one local place to a host of other places the world over’ (Crang 1999: 31). It is the particular way that these local and global networks and flows interact and intersect in a particular place that gives its uniqueness. In contrast to Tuan’s notion of ‘pause’ (2007: 6), Massey (1994, 2005) defines place as ‘process’, as something that is open, not static. For Massey, place is...

...the sphere of a dynamic simultaneity, constantly disconnected by new arrivals, constantly waiting to be determined (and therefore always undetermined) by the construction of new relations. It is always being made and always therefore, in a sense, unfinished (Massey 2005: 107)

Massey’s (1994) description of the London neighbourhood of Kilburn paints a vivid picture of place that is simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary, local and global—a multi-cultural, richly chaotic, tapestry of life, with evident similarities to Hackney. In Hackney food shops and restaurants

cater to a diverse ethnic population; gentrified enclaves exist where Victorian houses cost over one million pounds; run down, sprawling council estates sit alongside gentrified Georgian terraces; and, loft-style living apartments are springing up on the back of the impending 2012 Olympics and Dalston's new found fame as the capital's cultural hotspot. These elements and other interpretations of Hackney are meaningful in different ways to different members of the community.

Each has its own view of what the essential place is, each partly based on the past, each drawing out a different potential future. ... Hackney is Hackney only because of the coexistence of all of those different interpretations of what it is and what it might be (Massey 1994: 138).

Central to this research is the development of a process for the visual re/presentation of space. By working with elements of Massey's definition of place that emphasise its ever-changing nature there is a danger that, taken to its extreme conclusion, particularly through a post-structuralist approach to narrative and typography, this could preclude the visual representation of anything legible or meaningful at all. Tempering this postmodern approach of place as process with Tuan's earlier Humanistic idea of pause perhaps reinforces connections with a broader historical context, thus providing a sense of the chaotic present alongside elements of the past that have contributed to the construction of the present. The contrasting terms of process and pause also translate well to elements used within graphic design practice—particularly those design interventions that offer a sense of temporality. For example, posters could be said to attempt to engender a pause through their design in which the reader is encouraged to stop and take in the information. Books could be said to work with both pause and process through the designer's attempts to engender 'pace' through the run of pages. This will be discussed further, in chapter eight, within the context of the design test projects.

Inherent in both Massey and Tuan's definitions is a sense of place; the vivid reality of everyday life shines through. These are not empty propositions, they are populated and alive, and it is this experience of everyday life within place that the geo/graphic design process seeks to communicate.

1.2 Everyday life and place

It wasn't until after the Second World War that everyday life emerged as a recognised area of intellectual and artistic inquiry (Bennett & Watson 2002, Blauvelt 2003a). Organisations such as Mass Observation in the UK and writers such as Michel de Certeau (1984, 1998), Georges Perec (1997), and Henri Lefebvre (1991), and groups such as the Situationist International have ensured everyday life has since continued to be a productive site of inquiry throughout art and the social sciences. Like place, everyday life is not a static phenomenon, but is 'a dynamic process which is continually unfolding and emergent' (Eyles 1989: 102). The context with which I refer to everyday life within this research is that of a 'taken for granted reality', a 'social construction which becomes a "structure" in itself'.

Everyday life is, therefore, the plausible social context and believable personal world within which we reside (Eyles 1989: 103).

Reading the narratives of everyday life

De Certeau's approach to the study of everyday life and the city was an ethnographic one (Blauvelt 2003a: 20), and he states that 'stories about places are makeshift things...composed with the world's debris' and that things 'extra and other...insert themselves into the imposed order' (de Certeau 1984: 107). Seemingly anticipating postmodern definitions of place, he suggests that

The surface of this order is elsewhere punched and torn open by ellipses, drifts and leaks of meaning: it is a sieve order...articulated by lacunae (de Certeau 1984: 107).

A comparison with Massey reveals striking similarities

If you really were to take a slice through time it would be full of holes, of disconnections, of tentative half-formed first encounters, littered with a myriad of loose ends...A discourse of closure it ain't (Massey 1997: 222).

De Certeau's 'sieve order' and Massey's 'loose ends' again articulate the complex, contradictory nature of place, they also clearly highlight the problem of visually representing place. On the one hand Tuan's notion of

pause is evident, residents feel a sense of 'rootedness', yet place is inevitably constantly changing, always in a state of flux, whether that be at a macro scale in terms of major development or regeneration, or at a micro scale in terms of the movement and interaction of individuals.

Developing this postmodern reading of place further, Barnes & Duncan (1992: 5) suggest that in analysing landscapes the metaphor of a text is appropriate as

it conveys the inherent instability of meaning, fragmentation or absence of integrity, lack of authorial control, polyvocality and irretrievable social contradictions.

This approach is underpinned by a postmodern understanding of a text, and of writing, that has been proposed by Barthes, amongst others. A 'text' is not simply something that resides on a printed page, but it encompasses all culturally produced items, such as maps, paintings, buildings and landscapes. Since the 'crisis of representation' that overtook the social sciences in the late 1980s, the 'supposed one to one link between language and brute reality' has been severed (Barnes & Duncan 1992: 2). Writing can no longer be seen to mirror reality, rather it reflects and refracts our own experiences as writers, and meaning is produced via the process of intertextuality in which texts draw on other texts, which in turn draw on other texts, and so on and so forth. Thus texts are 'constitutive of reality' (Barnes & Duncan 1992: 5).

Barthes (1997: 168) saw the city as a discourse—'the city speaks to its inhabitants, we speak our city...simply by living in it'. In early structuralist works, Barthes sought to 'decipher society's signs and to reveal the complexity and instability' of the everyday landscape (Duncan & Duncan 1992: 18). However, his later post-structuralist work argues that a definitive interpretation of landscape is impossible, because of the inherent instability of meaning and endless chain of signifiers and signifieds (Duncan & Duncan 1992: 26). Barthes suggests developing a multiplicity of readings of the city, generated by a range of readers, 'from the native to the stranger' (Barthes 1997: 171). Yet he never seems to fully disown his earlier realist ontological position (Duncan & Duncan 1992: 20), and ends *Semiology and the Urban* by suggesting that 'many of us should try and decipher the city we are in, starting if necessary with a personal rapport' (Barthes 1997: 171). The word 'decipher' seems to point to a 'code' that is

discoverable, and perhaps contradicts his post-structuralist position of meaning as 'never fixed, but always in a state of deferral' (Leach 2002: 4).

Daniels & Cosgrove (1988: 8) take the notion of landscape as text, and the paradox of representing place, to its ultimate post-structuralist, conclusion by suggesting that

From such a postmodern perspective landscape seems less like a palimpsest whose 'real' or 'authentic' meanings can somehow be recovered with the correct techniques, theories or ideologies, than a flickering text displayed on the word-processor screen whose meaning can be created, extended, altered, elaborated and finally obliterated by the merest touch of a button.

Their analogy is clear, however, in reality it is difficult to fully delete a digital file. Like the palimpsest, a ghostly imprint of the data remains on the hard drive. In terms of place, long disappeared buildings or stories of past events do remain, and are referred to both formally and informally. Blue plaques reveal famous occupants of houses, memorials (both formal and informal) remember those who have lost their lives in an event, and directions given by those who are long-term residents of a place can often refer to landmarks that no longer exist—'take a left where the Star Garage used to be'. Ephemeral narratives or myths are also constructed around other places, such as 'unusual houses, cemeteries, and lonely bridges' (Bird 2002: 525). These local narratives define a community in a certain way, highlighting outsiders or perceived transgressions of a particular value system. They tell us less about formal history and more about a community's need to 'construct their sense of place and cultural identity' (Bird 2002: 526). Shields (1991: 47) has defined 'place-image' as an over-simplified labeling that plays a part in constructing place by affecting one's decision as to whether to visit somewhere, with traces remaining in culturally produced artefacts even after the nature of the place has changed.

De Certeau describes his ethnographic findings as an urban text, created by 'ordinary practitioners of the city', those who 'live down below', who compose this urban text as they walk within the city. De Certeau (1984: 93–97) compares the act of walking to speaking—'it is a spatial acting-out of place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of language)' and he compares the twists and turns of pedestrians to 'turns of phrase'—it is

a 'rhetoric of walking' (de Certeau 1984: 100). Pinder (2005: 401) states that de Certeau's contribution to the study of place has been highly productive, but that its 'dichotomous formulations...lead to a romanticised version of resistance', for example, the almost exclusively male flâneur had a freedom to wander the streets in a way that was denied to women. However, whilst this freedom is still, to an extent denied to women, there is no doubt de Certeau's writings have been central to the continued practice of walking in relation to experiencing everyday life and place.

1.3 Walking as an exploratory tactic of the everyday

The practice of walking has been central to the study of everyday life and place and continues to grow in popularity today. As well as de Certeau (1984, 1998), walking artists have their roots in the practice and writings of Walter Benjamin, Henri Lefebvre (1991), the Surrealists, and, in particular, the Situationist International—a political and artistic movement, predominantly active in Paris between 1957 and 1972. The Situationists were diametrically opposed to le Corbusier's vision of rational architecture (Home 1996). Defining the street as the space of 'real life' in the city, they were determined 'to penetrate the outward, spectacular, commercialized signs of mass culture and explore its interior' (Sadler 1998: 19). Their method was the *dérive*, or drift, through which they explored places psychogeographically. Psychogeography focuses on 'the hidden, forgotten and obscure' within 'the settings and practices of the streets, in their fragments, everyday materials and detritus' (Pinder 2005: 389). As a practice that explores experiences of place through ambience, atmosphere, and mood, psychogeography retains a sense of the marginal—this is not the property of traditional maps. Urban explorers continue this psychogeographic tradition today, though more often than not their territory is derelict buildings. Urban exploration (UE) has been described as 'an interior tourism that allows the curious-minded to discover a world of behind-the-scenes sights' (Ninjalicious 2005 in Garrett 2010: 1449). According to Pinder (in Garrett 2010: 1451) the past of the city is often erased or sanitised and repackaged in a commoditised form, so the interest in UE is partly due to a desire to 'find gaps and cracks in this spectacularised urban space'.

Although an 'alternative' practice, interest in psychogeography has perhaps never been higher and is also evidenced by the large numbers of urban

walking artists (for example walk walk walk), and the popularity of the writer Iain Sinclair.

Walking is the best way to explore and exploit the city...Drifting purposefully is the recommended mode, trampling asphalted earth in alert reverie, allowing the fiction of an underlying pattern to reveal itself (Sinclair 2003: 4).

'Drifting purposefully' could be seen as an oxymoron, but the purposeful nature comes from the fact that it is 'a deliberate attempt to think of spaces and spatiality differently' (Pile 2002: 212). For example, walking can explore place in a multi-sensory way, going beyond a solely visual interpretation (Pink 2008: 180). More recently some cultural geographers (for example Battista et al 2005, Pinder 2001, 2005, Phillips 2005) have focused on walking artists' urban exploration of the city. Such experimental practices 'can play a vital role in the development of critical approaches to the geographies of cities' as they can challenge the status quo in terms of the framing and representation of urban space (Pinder 2005: 385). The attractions of walking are 'its unfinished nature' and that it 'offers no problematic resolution' (Phillips 2005: 509). This type of exploration, with its emphasis on chance and the everyday, align well with Massey's definition of place. Indeed, Massey suggests that maps constructed by the Situationists (fig. 4) 'seek to disorient, to defamiliarise, to provoke a

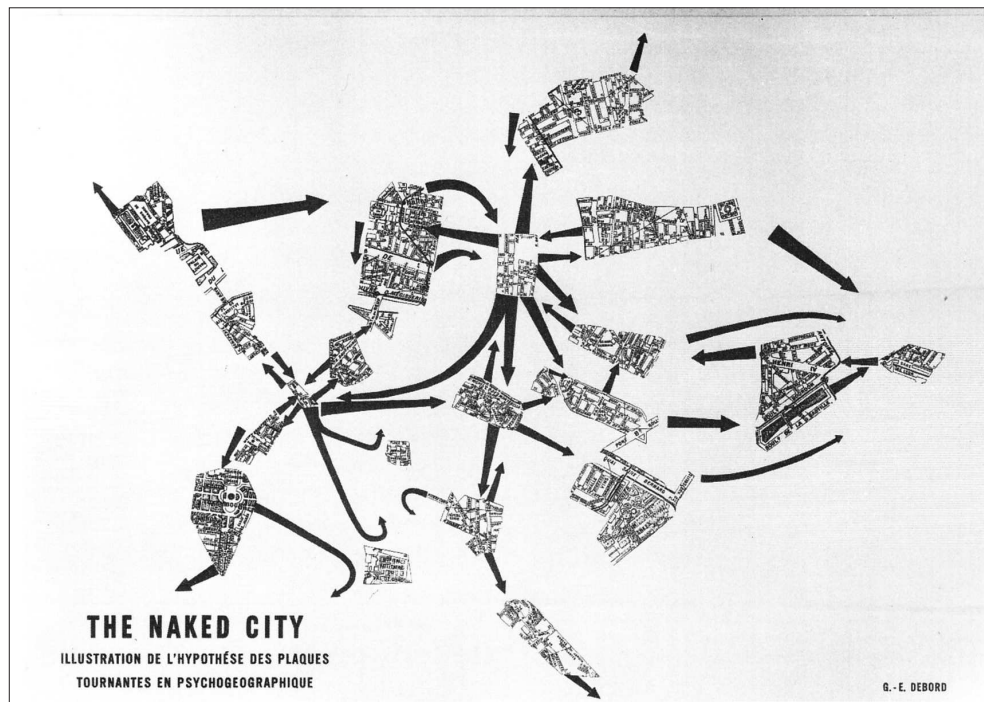


Fig. 4 Guy Debord with Asger Jorn, 'The Naked City' (1957), in Sadler, S (1999) *The Situationist City*, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p60

view from an unaccustomed angle' and expose the 'incoherences and fragmentations of the spatial itself' (Massey 2005: 109). So, unlike Phillips (2005), who sees the 'fixative' nature of paper-based representation as a problem to avoid, Massey seems to suggest that there are communicative possibilities within two-dimensional representational practices.

Walking will be discussed further in chapters three and six in relation to the methods undertaken to develop the geo/graphic design process. It is a practice that is essentially a form of exploration, and exploration in the traditional sense is inextricably linked to the history and development of cartography.

1.4 Mapping place

The geographic visualisation of space has been dominated by science since the Enlightenment, lending the map an air of neutral authority and unquestionable truth.

No other image generated by human effort is granted such exemption from the personal, the subjective, the assumption of interestedness with which we automatically invest paintings and drawings (even photographs), essays and history (even eye-witness accounts) (Wood 1992: 66).

The traditional map translates three-dimensional space into an unpeopled, two-dimensional surface. It positions the user above and outside of the territory, playing the 'god trick', allowing one to take an omnipotent position, able to survey everything at once, with no hindrance of darkness, regardless of time of day or time zone (Pickles 2004: 80). This map gives no sense of the vertical, the emphasis is on the ground—suggesting 'the city is a place to be traversed... not an area to be lived in and through' (Black 1997: 13). As de Certeau (1984: 97) states, the 'geographical system' that transforms 'action into legibility... causes a way of being in the world to be forgotten'. However, contemporary geographic thinkers have moved beyond this idea of a map as an impersonal, neutral 'truth'.

Deconstructing the map

Harley's (1989) seminal paper *Deconstructing the Map* sought to reposition understandings of the map away from the neutrality of science and towards a rhetorical device and representation of power. Harley

suggests that those who ascribe to the scientific model of cartography believe that 'systematic observation and measurement offer the only route to cartographic truth' (Harley 1989: 2). Yet he saw cartography as a form of language, and therefore, maps as texts that could be read and deconstructed in the post-structuralist sense, reading 'between the lines of the map... to discover the silences and contradictions that challenge the apparent honesty of the image' (Black 1997: 18). This process of deconstruction severed the unquestioned link between reality and representation (Harley 1989: 3).

Although Harley's paper, and the many that followed it, led to the development of a critical cartographic movement away from the positivist, scientific epistemology, it has generated some polarised views. For example, Belyea¹ (1992) accuses Harley of a superficial reading of the theorists behind his ideas. Albert (2003: np) cites Foucault's statement 'Il n'y a pas de texte d'en dessous' (there's nothing under the text), suggesting Harley had not really understood that this means that 'the map in itself, doesn't actually mean anything, or have any stable and objective relation to "reality"'. As I have alluded to earlier, following such arguments to a logical conclusion ends with the inability to produce or discuss representations at all. So, perhaps Harley was endeavouring to temper the abstract theoretical propositions in order to provide a more stable platform for the introduction of his socio-political agenda, and to persuade the discipline to engage with 'a postmodern climate of thought' (Harley 1989: 1). Wood (2002: 150) describes this as letting 'fresh air' into the 'overheated study' and legitimating 'a new discourse about maps' (Wood 2002: 156). Harley's inclusion in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (Hubbard, Kitchin & Valentine 2004) suggests he achieved a measure of success with these aims.

Today, the discipline of cartography remains fairly untouched by such theoretical debates, and similar divides persist between cultural geographers and cartographers; science and art; and, image and text. As a cartographic historian, Harley was concerned with developing a theoretical, socio-political framework for the reading of maps, and offers few strategies to change the practice of mapping. It is easy to see how the divide between theorists and practitioners developed with

¹ Belyea is an associate professor of English Literature at the University of Calgary, and a fluent French speaker. Therefore it is perhaps not surprising that she is able to offer such a close reading of the original texts and accuse Harley of a superficial reading.

cartographers accused of having ‘lost interest in the meaning of what they represent’ (Harley 1990: 7), and as mere ‘manipulators and generalizers of other people’s data’ (Harley 1990: 10). These criticisms are partly due to cartographers seeking validation of their practice under the auspices of science—they gain academic status, but the subject is reduced to the development of technology and aesthetics, with no involvement in content or meaning (Harley 1989: 10).

More often than not polar opposites such as art and science are used to criticise and demean each other, or are used unproductively, to define the discipline in a negative way—‘cartography is an art because it is not a science’ or ‘cartography is a science because it is not an art’ (Krygier 1995). Science’s domination has been established through two particular arguments. Firstly, that the graphics on a map are simply the outcome of a scientific process and their value is not linked to science. This relies on the definition of science as objective and neutral and art as subjective and indulgent. Secondly, that scientific activity is purely about progress, with new knowledge replacing old, unlike art, which sits old alongside new in a museum (Krygier 1995). Blakemore & Harley (1980: 13) suggest that there is a need to move towards an articulation of ‘a fundamental principle, deeper than form or content’. Interestingly, graphic designer Ken Garland suggests that a broad definition of ‘mapping’ is useful as if that reveals links between such diverse items as the London Underground diagram and the score of Beethoven’s Ninth it will also offer a counter to the tendency ‘for art, science and technology to be mutually exclusive’ (Garland 1996: 81).

Krygier (undated: np) speculates on a ‘cartographic anxiety’ regarding the map and other visual representations, and Perkins (2006: np) notes that geographers are ‘very good at deconstruction, not so good at construction’. He suggests that since geography’s ‘cultural turn’ a strategic retreat from the map, has coincided with an ‘obsession with writing and theory’ (Perkins 2004: 381). Perkins is not suggesting that writing itself is problematic, and this is also the case in terms of this research. However, even though written representations of place are now prevalent, cultural geographers have failed to engage with the design of the printed page, in any sustained way, as another means to further the understanding and communication of place.

Perkins (2006) suggests that more questions should be asked about how 'the visual' could enable the discipline to change. The notion of 'the visual' has generated a relatively recent debate within geography. Rose (2003: 212) claims that geographers understand the visual but have yet to analyse it in any sustained way. She focuses on images that geographers use during teaching rather than those they construct. Ryan (2003) disagrees with Rose in terms of geographers' abilities to theorise the visual, and shifts the argument to practice. He accuses cultural geographers of producing work that remains 'conservative in its choice of method' and suggests they need to think more 'imaginatively about the methods they employ' (Ryan 2003: 233).

To understand cartography as a process that depends on a 'functional synthesis' of art and science questions 'the need and possibility of separating art from science' (Krygier 1995: 8). Kitchin & Dodge (2007: 331) also suggest that 'cartography is profitably conceived as a processual, rather than representational, science', and that 'maps emerge through practices'—their preferred term is mappings. This 'processually emergent' understanding (Gerlach 2008, Latham & McCormack, 2004) questions the taken for granted ontological position of cartography as objective and truthful, and positions maps as 'ontogenetic in nature... always remade every time they are engaged with' (Kitchin & Dodge 2007: 335). Without these practices a map is simply a collection of lines, points and ink shaded areas, the map-reader has to bring it to life. This constant usage contributes to the belief of 'ontological security' as the user's knowledge of map use develops and is reaffirmed each time (Kitchin & Dodge 2007: 335). This perspective offers 'a conceptual shift' in thinking about maps (Kitchin & Dodge 2007: 335) that could be applied to other representational artefacts.

1.5 Visual representation and reality

This research and practice will attempt to go beyond the two-dimensional surface of the map to reveal a sense of place, but in doing so it will not subscribe to the idea of a single 'truth' that is waiting to be revealed. As Cosgrove & Domosh (1993: 35–6) state,

The problem of representation is only a 'crisis' if we somehow think that we are conveying some independent truth about the world, that we are relaying an authentic representation.

This 'crisis of representation' was precipitated by postmodern challenges to 'the privileged sites from which representations emanate, notably western, male intellectuals' (Duncan & Ley 1993: 7). For some geographers, the 'permanence' of print is therefore problematic, and Perkins (2004: 385) notes a shift from representation to action. Thrift's (1996, 2000a and 2000b) non-representational theory suggests that representations, especially those that are text based, are incapable of communicating the multi-sensory experiences of everyday life, and privilege the text rather than the experience (Del Casino & Hanna 2006, Nash 2000). The turn from visual and literary texts to a focus on expressive, body-practices simply creates a new version of an old divide—theory and practice (Nash 2000: 657). For this research, perhaps the challenge is to create 'open' work that enables a new 'performance' with each reading, rather than attempting to contain place within a 'fixed', mimetic representation. Yet 'physical presence and immediacy cannot be stored (in time) directly as representations...without losing immediacy' (Dirksmeier & Helbrecht 2008: 7) and the problem with text-based versions of events is that 'the words try and catch up with the event...but...they always remain "after-words"' (Dirksmeier & Helbrecht 2008: 10). However, to accept that certain things in life are 'unsayable or unwrite-able' is to imply that 'the work of referring to the world is fruitless' which seems strange, as we spend much of our time attempting to do such things—for example, recounting stories of our day to friends (Laurier & Philo 2006: 354–5). So, perhaps persisting with 'traditional' print-based forms of representation still offers some possibilities.

Indeed, maps are not simply fixed representations of places, but they are used and interpreted in multiple ways.

[M]aps stretch beyond their physical boundaries; they are not limited by the paper on which they are printed or the wall upon which they might be scrawled. Each crease, fold, and tear produces a new rendering, a new possibility, a new (re) presentation, a new moment of production and consumption, authoring and reading, objectification and subjectification, representation and practice (Del Casino & Hanna 2006: 36).
(fig. 5)

There is clearly resonance here with Barthes' (1977) notion of the 'death of the author', with the map being produced and reproduced by the reader. Del Casino & Hanna's (2006: 37) move is towards 'map spaces'



Fig. 5: Hackney map used throughout the course of the research

that are simultaneously both representations and practices, which make the non-productive binary oppositions of text and space, experience and representation, redundant (Del Casino & Hanna 2006). This way of thinking inextricably links the map with space and the experience of that space, and enables the possibility of grounding a representation of space in print, without 'fixing' the meaning. In a similar vein, Crouch (2010) discusses the performative nature of two dimensional artworks, not just in their material production, but through the viewer's engagement.

The performative 'life' or vitality of the artwork—even two dimensional work—is performed too by the individual in his and her encounter with it. Two dimensional pictures may not be experienced only through the gaze, but with diverse dispositions of the body, memory recall, intersubjectivity, emotion, fear and anxiety...' (Crouch 2010: 8).

However, whilst the reader might be the key to interpreting the text, this is not to imply that the designer is irrelevant. Design interventions have the potential to enable a certain kind of reading to occur. This will be discussed further in the following sections relating to graphic design and in chapter eight, in relation to the analysis of the design test projects.

1.6 Collaborations and methodological developments

Whilst geographers have predominantly challenged the nature of representation via written means, large numbers of artists have explored the potential of the city, and its representation, within their work. Cosgrove (2006: 150) goes as far to suggest that 'scientific' cartography is unable to capture the contemporary city and that

the most challenging mappings today are found in the creative and imaginative work of artists, architects and designers...
(Cosgrove 1999: 19).

De Silvey & Yusoff (2006: 573) state that 'art and geography share a common route in the search for knowledge through the medium of vision' and that 'art plays an important role in questioning geography's visual methods' (2006: 574, see also McLaren 2006). They note, as does Shultz (2001), the works of contemporary artists have increasingly begun to reference geographical forms, such as maps, field notes, and charts (figs. 6–7). However, geography and art do not necessarily share 'a common

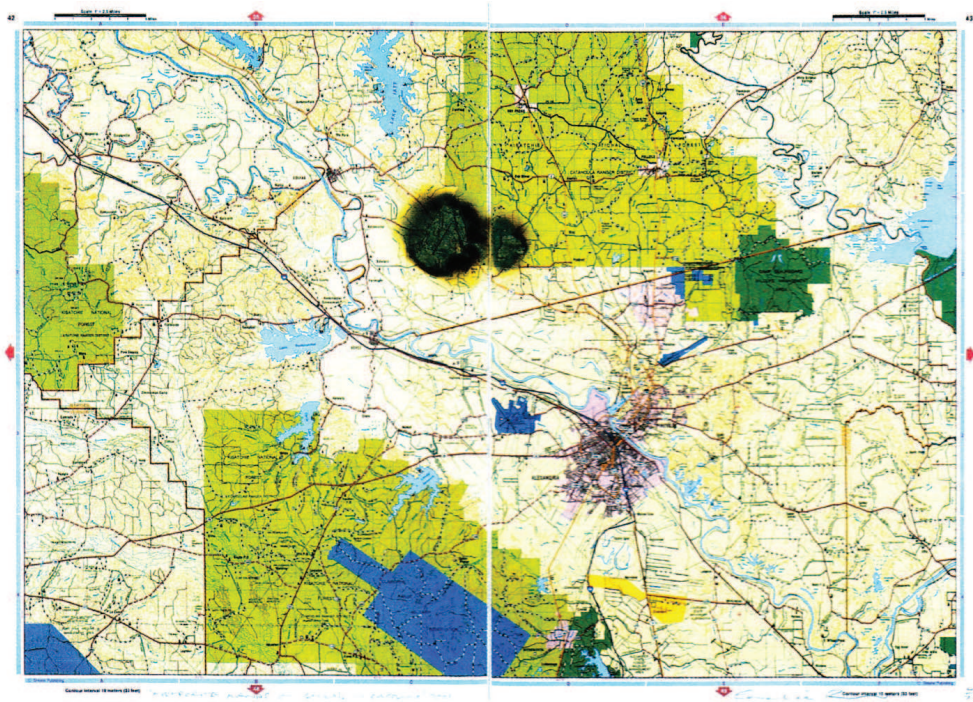


Fig. 6 Cornelia Parker 'Bagdad Loiana', 2001, in *The Map is Not the Territory*, exhibition catalogue (5 October – 16 November 2002), London, England & Co, p11

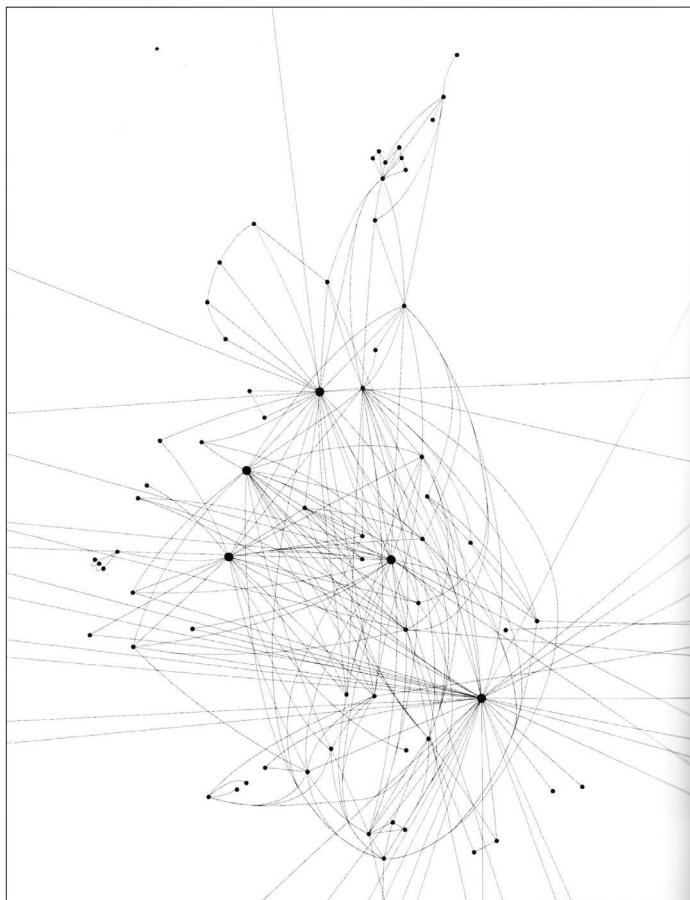


Fig. 7 Langlands & Bell, 'Air Routes of Britain (Day)', 2002, in Harman, K (2004) *You are here: Personal geographies and other maps of the imagination*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, p98

language or set of practices' and are perhaps best described as discrete disciplines that intersect at the point of their shared interest in the visual (De Silvey & Yusoff 2006: 582). Ryan (2003) suggests collaboration and dialogue with visual artists as a route to new ideas. Creative research projects between geographers and artists have the potential to enable a proactive sharing of ideas and development of new visual methodologies. One example, *Visualising Geography*, was an AHRB funded research project developed by geographers Felix Driver and Catherine Nash, and artist Kathy Prendergast. Based in the Dept. of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London, the project sought to develop long-standing connections between geography and the visual arts. *Landing*, the work in progress exhibition that developed from the research project was curated by Ingrid Swenson, and was staged at Royal Holloway during June and July 2002. *Visualising Geography* sought to avoid simplistic binary oppositions such as the 'academic' and 'creative' and saw all participants as equal partners in the collaborative process—the artists were not there to simply illustrate the geographers' ideas (Driver, Nash & Prendergast 2002).

Another example of such a project is *Domain* (Kinman & Williams 2007), a collaboration between cartographer Edward Kinman and artist John Williams. Their project centred on the representation of Longwood University campus in Virginia and the visual outcome was a series of four stoneware panels. The panels depicted the campus and its adjacent ethnic neighbourhood from diverse social, cultural and political historical perspectives. Williams' focus and contribution to the partnership seems to centre on the media involved, enabling Kinman to execute his ideas through clay. Although Kinman reflects on how working with an alien media changed his cartographic process, this collaboration seems to delimit, or perhaps presume, the role or 'domain' of the artist. A more reflective and productive experience seems to be that of Foster & Lorimer (2007: 427–8) who use collaboration 'to ask awkward questions of your own conventions and accepted working practice' and realise that it is possible to enmesh aspects of joint-working into their individual work, and that at points it was possible to move between each others perceived disciplinary boundaries and exchange both roles and skills.

Partly through such collaborations with artists, but also through debates around issues such as non-representational theory, performativity and phenomenology (Davies & Dwyer 2007: 257) contemporary cultural

geographers are engaging with research methods and 'interpretive strategies' that enable them to 'capture the ephemeral, the fleeting, [and] the immanence of place' (Davies & Dwyer 2007: 261). Such approaches are also clearly due to postmodern shifts within qualitative social science research methods in general (see for example, O'Neill 2008, O'Neill & Hubbard 2010, Roberts 2008), which rather than attempting to reveal certainty or truth, adopt an open and reflexive stance in relation to interpreting the complexity of the world. For example, Lorimer & MacDonald's 'rescue archaeology' on Taransay attempts 'to rework traditional approaches' in order to devise a field methodology that is appropriate for undertaking 'an archaeology of the present' (Lorimer & MacDonald 2002: 95); and, John Wylie's *Smoothlands: fragments/landscapes/fragments* combines walking and 'phenomenological methods of watching and picturing' (Wylie 2006: 458). Rather than framing these experiences and images within a traditional field written account, Wylie interweaves his photographic images of place with short excerpts of writing about landscape and subjectivity, read whilst undertaking his journey. Michael Pryke's study of Potsdamer Platz in Berlin 'employs forms of visual and audio montage to show something of the making of spaces' (Pryke 2002: 474). Bassett (2004) suggest that such methods are inextricably linked to traditional geographic methods such as exploration and fieldwork, and that these new incarnations are revitalising the identity of the discipline.

All three of these examples were published within the journal *Cultural Geographies*, in the section *Cultural Geographies in Practice*. The section was established in 2000 and provides a forum for those cultural geographers using alternative methods to publish their work. It also offers a space for work that doesn't conform to the traditional format of a text-based article. However, given the constraints of the academic's role in relation to research and publishing, the traditional text-based, peer reviewed journal article is still the primary means for publishing one's work. It is perhaps because of this that much of this research using non-traditional methods, is still published as 'written accounts of practice' (Dwyer & Davies 2010: 92, see also Lorimer, 2005; 89, Thrift 2000a: 3).

However, it is clear that many geographers are engaging with new technologies, and film and sound in particular, as ways of exploring place. Indeed, Lorimer's (2010) recently published paper *Moving image*

methodologies for more-than-human geographies attempts to address this growing interest in moving image ‘for grasping the ... non-representational dimensions of life’ (Lorimer 2010: 237) and ‘contributes to ongoing efforts to develop practical visual methodologies for cultural geography’ (Lorimer 2010: 251). This engagement with film and sound was particularly evident during the week long, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded, *Experimenting with Geography: see hear make and do* (EWG) workshop, held in May 2010 at Edinburgh University, where the majority of participants were working with sound and video. Cultural geography can obviously ultimately be richer for these visual and aural developments, but many of these new technologies seem to be chosen (perhaps partly due to discussions around the non-representational) via a conscious rejection of the old; that there is a sense that print equates to the immovable, to the tired, dusty pages of academic journals that refuse to ‘move with the times’. Even within the pages of *Cultural Geographies in Practice* few of the articles printed really explore the communicative possibilities of type, image, and the page. Wylie (2006) is one of the exceptions, but the design interventions are still limited to unusually positioned images within the text (fig. 8).

Some geographers are concerned with the potential offered by text, and Brace & Johns-Putra (2010), in their study of creative writing suggest that the practice of crafting a text is also performative, and by taking this position address the divide between thought and action referred to by Nash (2000). They glimpse

...a fusion of thought, action, body, and text in ways that undermine the epistemological separation of representation and non-representation and thereby avoid the critique of representation that emphasizes its static fixity and evacuation of process (Brace & Johns-Putra 2010: 403).

Similarly, Lorimer (2008: 182) also seeks to further develop cultural geography’s relationship with the word. Suggesting that

What a geographical education does not always equip us with is a way with words; a language sufficient to do fullest justice to the intensities, to the properties and to the rich lore of place.

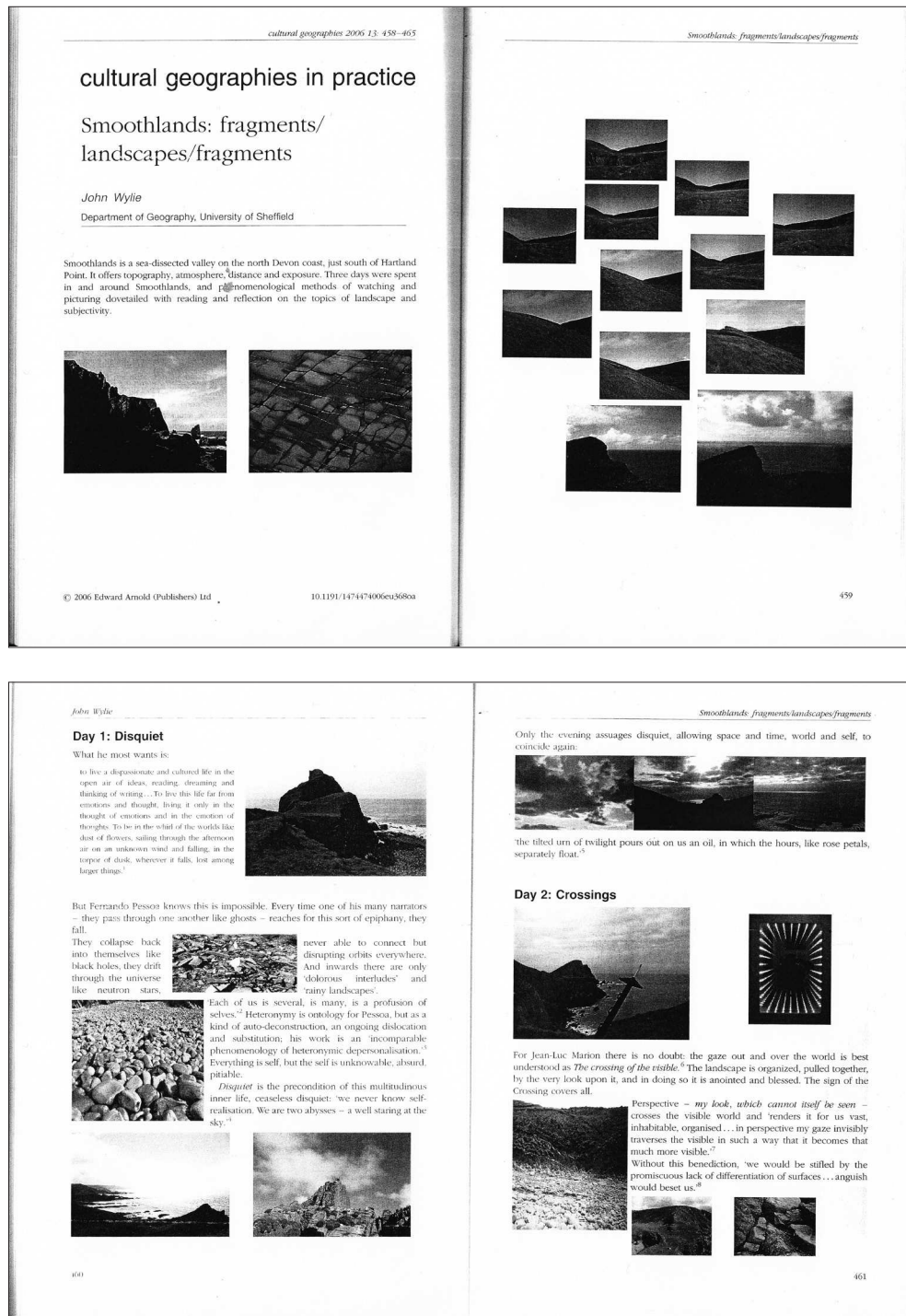


Fig. 8 Sample pages, Wylie, J (2006) 'Smoothlands: fragments/landscapes/fragments', *Cultural Geographies*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp 458-461

Both Lorimer (2008) and Brace & Johns-Putra (2010) focus on creative writing and the potential of a poetic engagement with place—themes that were also at the forefront of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded *Writing Landscape* interdisciplinary symposium held in 2007, organised by Brace & Johns-Putra. Lorimer notes that there ‘seems an increased premium... placed on the creative performance, presentation and writing of geographical studies of place’ and goes on to suggest that geographers are now prepared to ‘consider style as a pressing issue’ within their writing (Lorimer 2008: 182). This seems to assume that traditional geographic writing has no style, however as Kinross (1985) has pointed out in relation to Modernist typography, and Atkinson (1990: 2) in relation to ethnography, this is merely a ‘rhetoric of neutrality’ and such writing clearly adopts the style of the academy. Perhaps part of the issue is that this tone or style is so overtly present within geographic writing that it ceases to be seen as a choice, but as a natural process that happens despite the author rather than because of her. Lorimer takes his argument further and suggests that such creative writing can benefit from being read aloud as with poetry.

Simply put, language transforms when it is heard, rather than read on the page, such that listeners might reasonably claim to see the sounds spoken (Lorimer 2008: 182).

Whilst Lorimer is unlikely to be trying to privilege the spoken word over the written in the way that many philosophers have done for centuries, the piece is perhaps symptomatic of a drive to explore new areas within cultural geography—in this case, creative writing and performance—that comes at the cost of ignoring the potential of typography and print. For example, within sound and poetry in particular there is a rich tradition of typographic experimentation from Dada, to the Futurists, and to concrete poets (figs. 9–11). For example, in discussing the work of Mallarmé (fig. 12), Eco (1989: 9) notes the following:

Blank space surrounding a word, typographical adjustments, and spatial composition in the page setting of the poetic text—all contribute to create a halo of indefiniteness and to make the text pregnant with infinite suggestive possibilities.

The search for *suggestiveness* is a deliberate move to ‘open’ the work to the free response of the addressee. An artistic work that suggests is also one that can be performed with the full emotional and imaginative resources of the interpreter.



Fig. 9 'Small Dada Evening', poster, Theo van Doesburg & Kurt Schwitters, 1922, in Blackwell, L (1998) *20th century type remix*, London, Laurence King, p.43

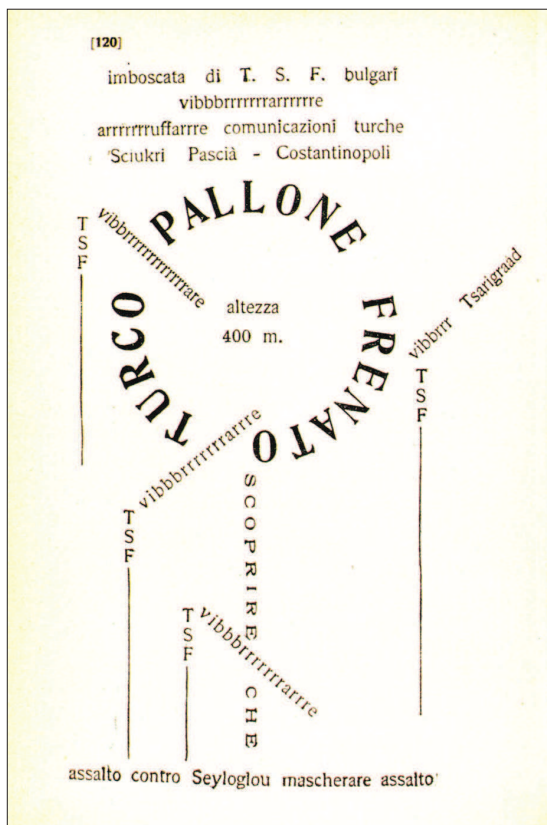


Fig. 10 Page from 'Zang Tumb Tumb', Filippo Marinetti, 1914, in Blackwell, L (1998) *20th century type remix*, London, Laurence King, p.25

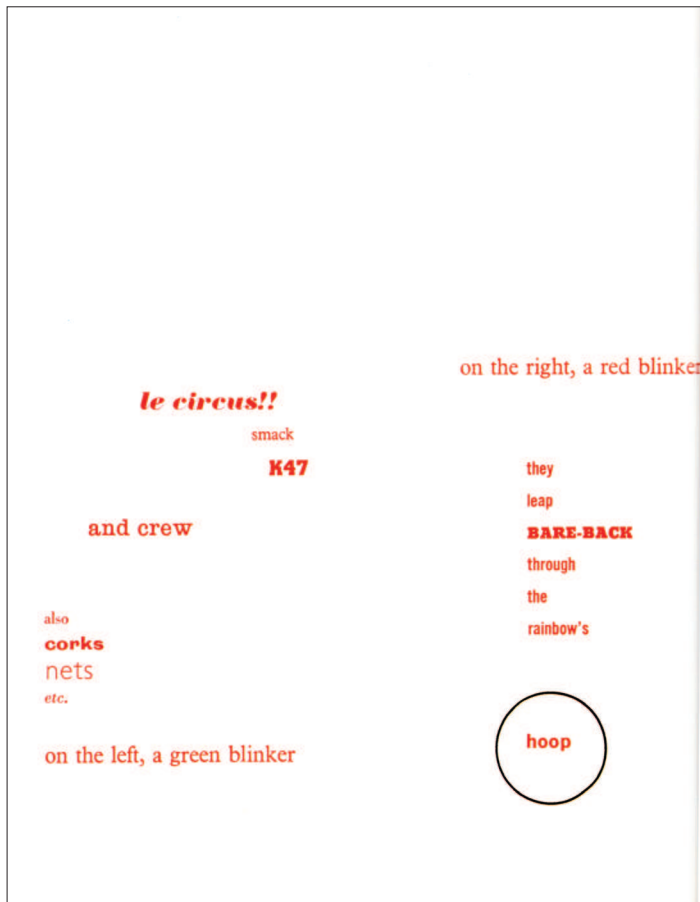


Fig.11 Poster poem, Ian Hamilton Finlay, 1964, in Poyner, R (2001) *Typographica*, London, Laurence King, p.36

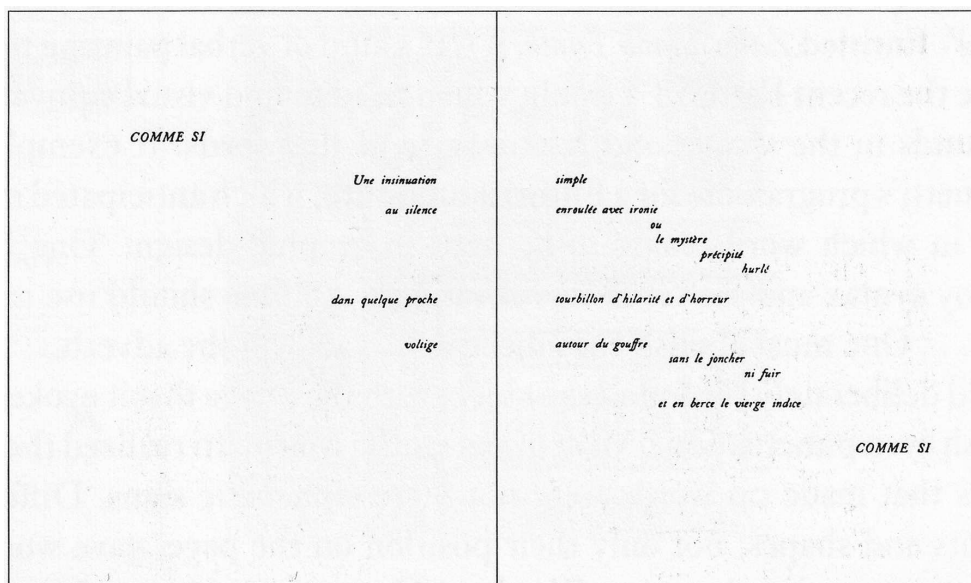


Fig. 12 Sample page from *Un coup de dés*, Stéphane Mallarmé, 1897, in Hollis, R (1994) *Graphic Design: A Concise History*, London, Thames & Hudson, p.37

One way to view typography is to paraphrase Baines and Haslam (2005: 10). 'Typography is to language what maps' were and perhaps, since Kitchen & Dodge (2007) and Del Casino & Hanna (2006), could be 'to geography'. Typography, which essentially gives visual form to language, can offer much more than a range of fonts to choose from and the construction of a page in a journal that enables the reader to digest the ideas contained without visual interference. Yet, although most academic cultural geographers are used to working with typography and graphic design in a broad sense, through their use of *Microsoft Word* or *Powerpoint*, few engage with these methods in ways that could usefully inform their own practices in regard to the representation of place and everyday life.

1.7 Graphic design: From form to content

The function of graphic design and typography, in basic terms, is to communicate by giving visual form to content. The variety of this content is enormous—from signage, to fashion advertising, to pharmaceutical packaging. The graphic designer uses typography, colour, image and format to produce a visual statement that meets the requirements of the client's desired message.

The rhetoric of design

Consideration of the audience is part of the process, and according to Buchanan the goal is 'to induce in the audience some belief about the past..., the present..., or the future' (Buchanan 1989: 92). The use of rhetoric enables the audience to become a 'dynamic participant' as the designer persuades through argument rather than statement (Tyler 1992: 22). Although the audience is active in this process, this position is rooted in the belief that one meaning can be communicated—that of the author, via the designer. One could perhaps argue that, having a very narrow target audience with a shared set of cultural values and experiences, and a simple message, this might be possible. As Atzmon (undated: 2) states 'if certain forms communicate specific ideas...there must be agreed-upon cultural meanings understood by both designer and user'. However, the representation of place is a more complex proposition.

From representation to interpretation

Frascara (2006: xiv) states the designer should create a 'space' where people engage with a message and develop interpretations. This acknowledges that there is a possibility of multiple meanings being developed by a variety of readers and the idea of a 'space of interpretation' provides an interesting model to pursue with regard to place. This 'space' is not only created through language—all elements are involved, from paper stock and format, to typeface. This could be described as 'visual language', or perhaps style.

The surface of the page

In his book *Lines: A Brief History* (2007), anthropologist Tim Ingold offers an analogy between the map and the printed page that draws the disciplines of graphic design and geography together and articulates an issue central to this research. Ingold (2007: 24) suggests the page—like the map—has 'lost its voice'. In the same way that there are no traces of the life of a place on a map, no evidence of the journeys undertaken to gain the knowledge to create it, language is also 'silenced' on the page of a book through the mechanical process of print (see also Bolter 1991: 68–9). Ingold suggests that before the advent of print there was a clear link between the manual gesture of writing and its graphic form on the page but that this link is now broken. With this link severed, Ingold (2007: 26) states that, in terms of the page, the perception of 'surface' has shifted from

something akin to a landscape that one moves through, to
something more like a screen that one looks at, and upon which
are projected images...

In geographic terms however, landscape is something the viewer remains outside of—it is 'an intensely visual idea'. In contrast, places are 'very much things to be inside of' (Cresswell 2004: 11). So perhaps Ingold's statement should read as 'something akin to place that one moves through, to something more like landscape that one looks at...'

Ingold suggests that before the advent of print, writing was akin to drawing, and that the words penned by the scribes conveyed feeling in an expressive way that is no longer apparent in print (Ingold 2007: 3). Also, in medieval times, reading was not solely related to cognition, there was a performative element to it as most texts, even if read in private, were

read aloud, therefore it was both an ‘acting out’ and ‘a taking in’ (Ingold 2007: 17) so listeners were in effect, ‘using their eyes to hear’ (Ingold 2007: 13). However, with reading becoming an internal, silent activity and print negating the unmediated connections ‘from the prophet’s mouth to the scribe’s inky traces’ (Ingold 2007: 13), Ingold suggests the reader became more passive and began to use their ‘ears to look’ (Ingold 2007: 13)—hence Ingold’s (2007: 26) use of the screen as a metaphor for the page. This ‘surveying’ of the page (Ingold 2007: 92) also brings to mind notions of the map positioning the viewer above and outside of the territory. In relation to print, this view of reading is one that separates thought and action. However, I would argue that the human link with the printed word remains in the form of the designer, who has the ability to recreate ‘page as place’ through an expressive use of typography and, reconfigure the act of reading as both cognitive and performatively embodied. However, Ingold (2007: 26) not only sees print as silencing the page, but also inducing a ‘split of skilled handicraft into separate components of “imaginative design” ... and “merely” technical execution’, that leads to ‘the implementation of pre-determined operational sequences that could just as well be done by machine’. Given that scribes executed work written or narrated by others, it is hard to see how this is any different. However, if Ingold constructed his text in *Microsoft Word* it is understandable how he might have arrived at this statement as it often pre-empts decisions regarding the formatting of typography.

Generally, however, proactive design choices are made before one presses ‘command P’, and graphic design education urges students to move beyond passively accepting the default choices on most design software, and see the computer as a tool. Designers also continue to engage with the physicality of media through the selection of stock, format and binding, and perhaps even die-cutting and embossing if budget allows. I would suggest that this also goes some way to challenging Ingold’s perception of separate components of design and execution. Pages may no longer reveal the visible nuances of the scribe’s hand, but they are no less a physical space, upon which the mark of the designer is clearly present. Ingold’s thinking seems to stem from a belief that the notion of ‘craft’—implying a physical engagement with tools and materials—no longer exists due to the advent of technology. I will question Ingold’s position within chapter eight, framing it within a discussion of the design test projects.

Style or substance?

Whilst proactive design choices may dispute the severing of the human link, some choices inflame another debate that rages intermittently within graphic design—that of style verses substance—essentially a debate about surface and depth. For some, style is the equivalent of graphic design's four-letter word, seen as 'false, shallow and meaningless' (Blauvelt 1995: 64). However, this ignores a 'communicative code' that distinguishes between readers of different cultural and social groups (Blauvelt 1995). Style is therefore part of the rhetoric, and cannot be divorced from content—the dualism is an artificial construction—'style is content too' (Bruinsma 1999: 2). Rock (2005: np) goes as far as pronouncing '*Fuck Content*', arguing that 'the materiality of a designer's method is his or her content', and how the designer 'speaks'. Style is a critical part of a designer's toolkit, but to adopt a style simply because of fashion, and employ it inappropriately is how style has become so misunderstood.

Modernism: Style without style?

The modernist designer's aim was to relay the message clearly and concisely, without extraneous ornament and produce a universal visual language. This portrays the designer, and the typography, as purely objective (Armstrong 2009: 11, Blauvelt 1995: 65), though as Kinross (1985) points out, this is actually a 'rhetoric of neutrality'. By the mid 1950s modernist typography had been widely adopted by large corporations, particularly in the United States, and the 'utopian ideal of a universality of form and visual language' became a style whose main features were white space, asymmetrical layouts and sans serif typography (Noble & Bestley 2001: 32) (figs. 13–15). Today the modernist 'style' is still regularly used—*Helvetica Neue* is considered fashionable and systems, information graphics and white space are prevalent (figs. 16–19). Keedy (2003: 59) describes the current 'version' of modernism—'Modernism 8.0', the 'latest upgrade' since Modernism's inception approximately eighty years ago, as a refuge from the complications of postmodernism and an easy style guide for 'clueless' designers. This is a harsh critique, but Keedy wishes to further the discipline and a retreat to 'fundamentally conservative dogma' (1997: 29) denies typography much of its ability to question and provoke critical debate. However, the debates on style suggest there is more to *Zombie Modernism* (Keedy 2001) than meets the eye. The adoption of the modernist typographic style reveals it as a craft in itself, one that doesn't purvey a



Fig. 13 Edouard Hoffman & Max Meidinger, 'Helvetica', type specimen, 1956-7, in Heller, S & Fili, L (1999) *Typology: Type design from the Victorian age to the digital age*, San Francisco, Chronicle Books, p.130

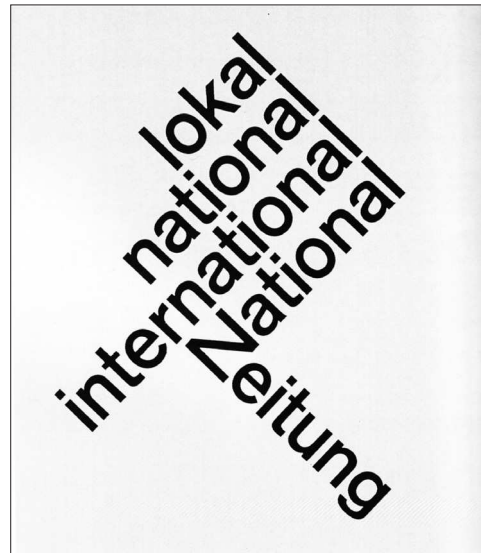


Fig. 14 Poster, Gerstner & Kutter, 1960, in Heller, S & Fili, L (1999) *Typology: Type design from the Victorian age to the digital age*, San Francisco, Chronicle Books, p.130

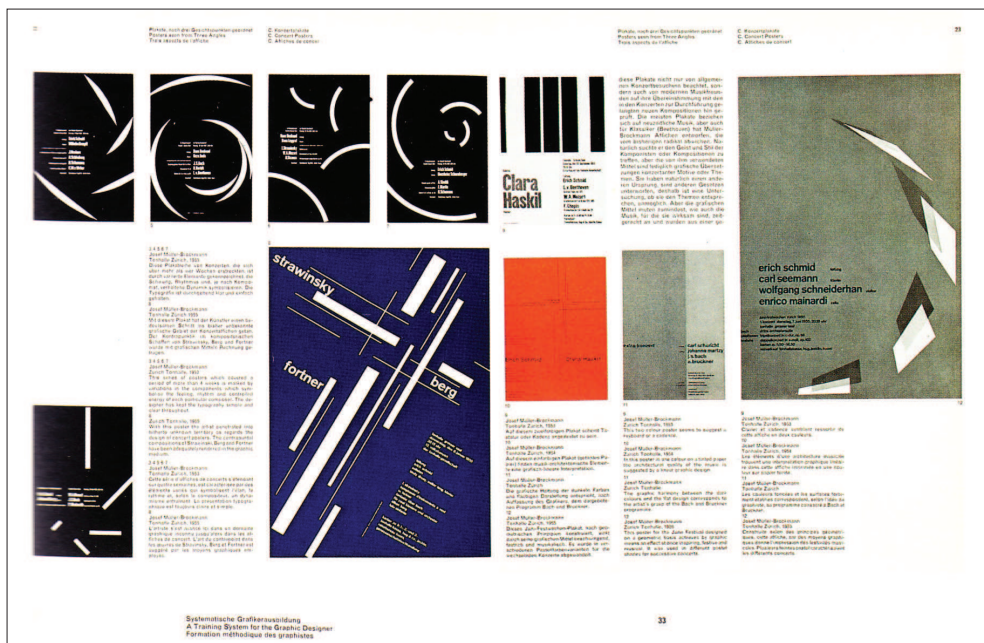


Fig. 15 Josef Müller Brockmann, 'Neue Grafik' magazine, example spread, in Blackwell, L (1998) *20th century type remix*, London, Laurence King, p.95



Fig. 16 Stapelberg & Fritz, 2005, example of series of flyers for German nightclub, in Fawcett-Tang, R (ed) (2007) **New Typographic Design**, London, Laurence King, p.29



Fig. 17 Stapelberg & Fritz, 2005, example of series of flyers for German nightclub, in Fawcett-Tang, R (ed) (2007) **New Typographic Design**, London, Laurence King, p.29



Fig. 18 Experimental Jetset, 2005, poster for Dutch theatre company, in Fawcett-Tang, R (ed) (2007) **New Typographic Design**, London, Laurence King, p.28



Fig. 19 Experimental Jetset, 2005, identity for Dutch theatre company, in Fawcett-Tang, R (ed) (2007) **New Typographic Design**, London, Laurence King, p.28

sinister rhetoric of neutrality, but one that speaks directly to its new target audience—the style conscious twenty-something.

1.8 Graphic design: From theory to practice

Typography has engendered vivid verbal and visual exchanges surrounding notions of style, ideology, and theoretical exploration. The traditional practice of typography is underpinned by a series of rules, or conventions, that centre on the production of clear, legible texts. For Morrison, writing in 1930...

Typography is the efficient means to an essentially utilitarian and only accidentally aesthetic end, for enjoyment of patterns is rarely the reader's chief aim. Therefore, any disposition of printing material which, whatever the intention, has the effect of coming between author and reader, is wrong (Morrison 2001: 170).

Such rules are an anathema to postmodernists, who don't subscribe to 'universally applicable values or solutions' (Poynor 2003: 11), and the 'sacred cow' of legibility has been 'assaulted' by new typographers, such as Jeffery Keedy, in the move to dispel the myth of typographic neutrality (Poynor 1994b: 84). Much of the new typography emanated from Cranbrook Academy in the United States (figs. 20–21), where students were engaging with post-structural theoretical writing, in particular that of Derrida, and making connections with their visual work (Rigley 2007: 292, see also Abbott Miller & Lupton 1996). This led them to attempt to

deconstruct, or break apart and expose, the manipulative visual language and different levels of meaning embodied in design in the same way that a literary critic might deconstruct and decode the verbal language of a novel (Poynor 1991: 13).

This approach could be seen as an attempt to probe beneath the surface of the page and engage with language and meaning through the medium of typography.

Misunderstandings and misappropriations

This was perhaps the first time graphic designers had engaged with such philosophical and theoretical propositions from outside the discipline. Poynor (2003: 10) suggests that graphic design has 'long had an aversion to theory' and, although this can perhaps be defended as 'symptomatic

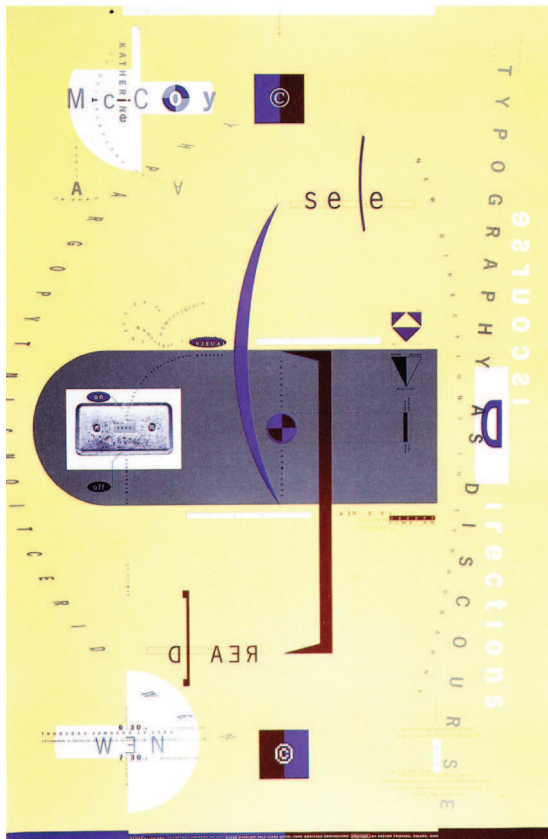


Fig. 20 Allen Hori 'Typography as Discourse' American Institute of Graphic Arts poster. 1989, in Aldersley Williams, H (ed) (1990) *The New Cranbrook Discourse*, New York, Rizzoli, p.91

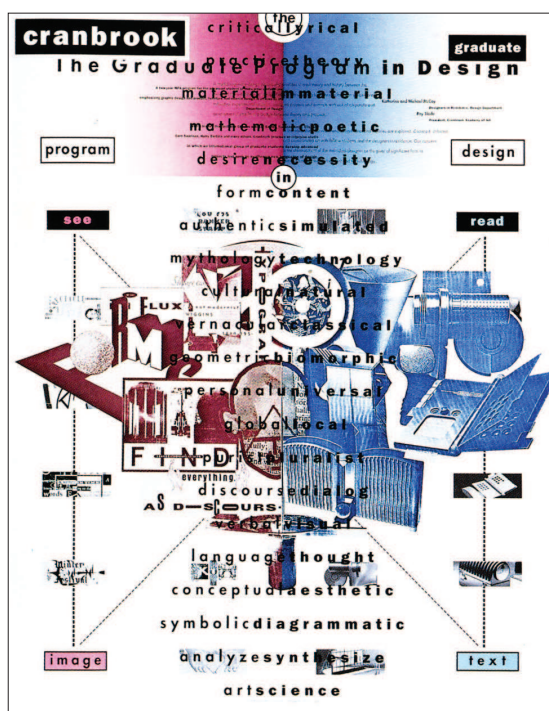


Fig. 21 Katherine McCoy 'Cranbrook: The Graduate Program in Design' poster, 1989, in Aldersley Williams, H (ed) (1990) *The New Cranbrook Discourse*, New York, Rizzoli, p.114

of the immaturity of the developing discipline' (Noble & Bestley 2001: 14), retrospective critiques of the work find it to be flawed. Some designers did attempt to engage with the ideas on a deeper level (Abbott Miller & Lupton 1996, Byrne & Witte 1994 and Lupton 2001), and during the early 1990s magazines such as *Emigre* (figs. 22–23) and *Eye* provided a platform for such work which developed into a largely unresolved debate (Poynor 2003: 144) about 'graphic authorship' (Rock 2002, see also Burdick 1993, Siegel 2007). Rock's (2002) article, *The designer as author* (first published in 1996), attempted to address the contradictory issues of the nature of authorship in relation to the context of graphic design and he remains sceptical of the use of the term. However, it was mistaken by many designers for an invitation to produce work that was criticised by many as at best self-initiated, at worst, self-indulgent. Some critics now feel that although the work expressed the theoretical ideas visually, many designers (perhaps like Harley) did not fully understand the texts they claimed to be inspired by (Drucker & McVarish 2009, Poynor 2003). For example, in post-modern terms, the role of the author is subservient to that of the reader.

... a text is made of multiple writings drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. (Barthes 1977: 148)

Barthes (1977: 142) further states that 'as soon as a fact is narrated... the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins'. So the debate about graphic authorship and the design gurus it spawned exist in contradiction to the theories that allegedly underpinned much of their work. Judging by the proceedings of the 2006 *Design Research Society* international conference, it seems that this theoretical naivety is still evident. For example, Dong-Sik & Hwang (2006) discuss 'deconstructionism' in graphic design in terms that focus purely on the visual, there is no discussion of the content or meaning of the work at all. Lupton also recently stated that

Theory is all about the question 'why'? The process of becoming a designer is focused largely on 'how' (Lupton 2009: 6).

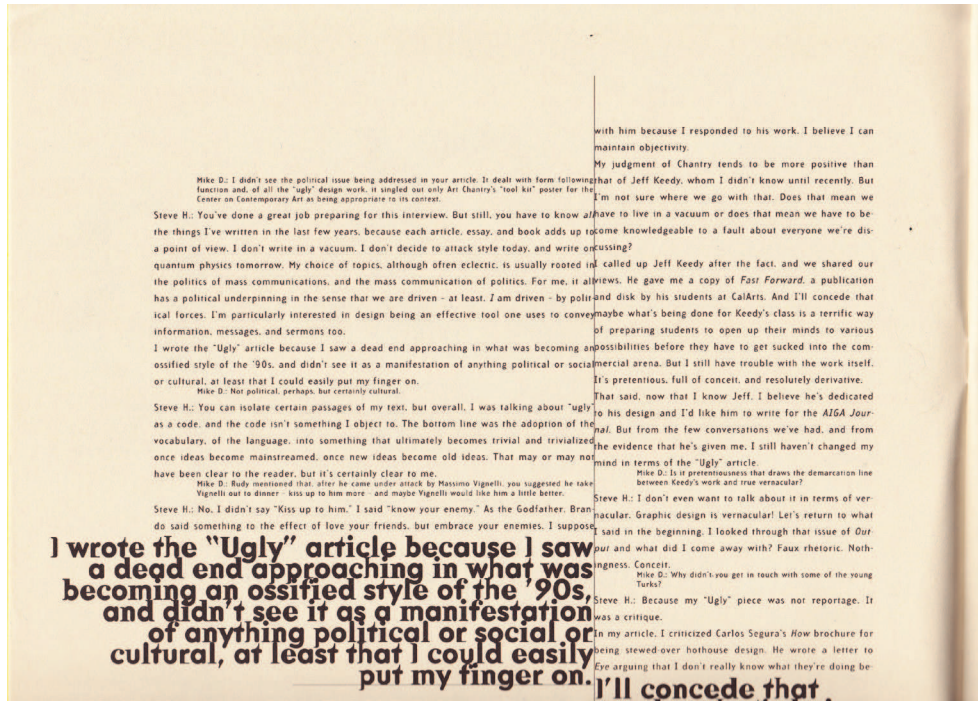


Fig. 22 Sample page detail, Dooley, M (1994) 'An interview with Steven Heller' *Emigre*, Iss. 30, no pagination

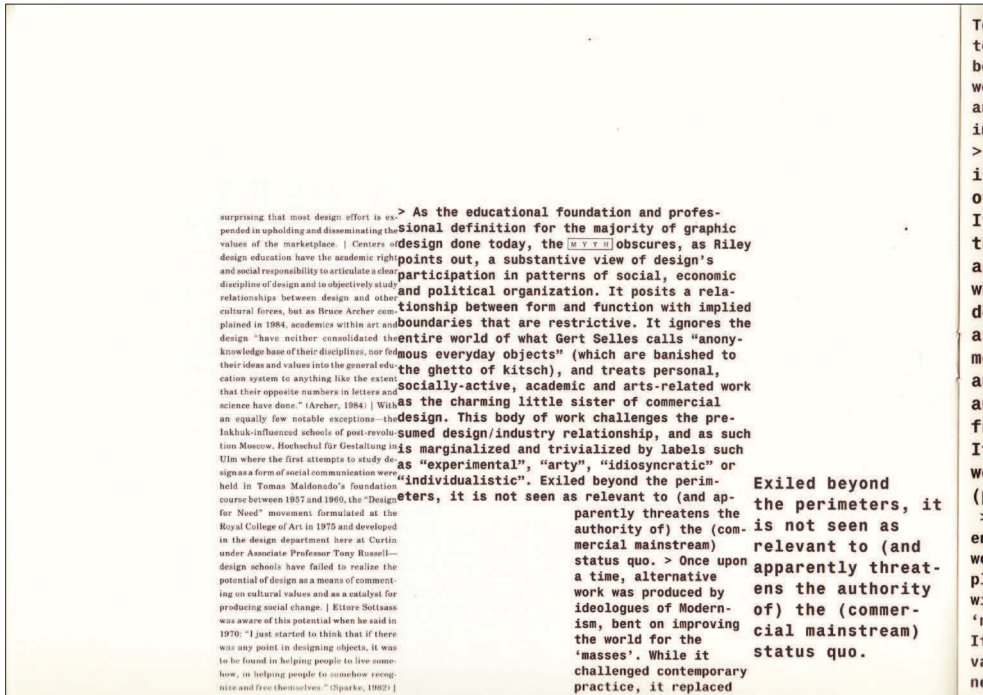


Fig. 23 Sample page detail, Riley, H (1992) 'Design in context' *Emigre*, Iss. 21, no pagination

Much of the early experimental typographic, 'authorial' work also ultimately rests in monographs of designers elevated to hero status—David Carson (Blackwell 1995) and Neville Brody (Wozencraft 1994) for example—whose work is known and revered for its visual style, rather than content or message.

Cult of the ugly

At the time, aesthetic or theoretical approval of such experimental work was not universally forthcoming. Rand (1997) accuses designers of being obsessed with theory and using it to generate impenetrable visual language and new style for the sake of it. This response, from an arch modernist, found many supporters (for example, Heller 1994, Kinross 1997a, 1997b). *Cult of the Ugly* (Heller 1994: 155) derided such work as 'driven by instinct and obscured by theory, with ugliness its foremost by-product', and suggested that it would be a 'blip...in the continuum of graphic design history' (1994: 158). This seems a pejoratively oppositional response from a writer who has become, along with Rick Poynor, one of the few critics to continually engage with graphic design. Heller also feared that experiments in design schools would be consumed by commercial designers and used as 'style without substance' (Poynor 1994a, 2003). Ironically, Heller later simplistically reduces such work to style himself, and states that 'now that postmodernism, deconstruction, and grunge are history, the next new thing has yet to emerge' (Heller 2002: x), and both Blauvelt (2003b) and Novosedlik (1996) note that self-expression rapidly replaced any real critical exploration. Fitzgerald (2003: 16) states that it is no surprise that these 'nonconformist forms' were absorbed into the mainstream as this is simply the 'life cycle of style'. It would seem that what began as a theoretical exploration of typography, language and graphic design in academia, became a commercially used style used to target the youth market (figs. 24–25). Ultimately, and somewhat ironically, a backlash to 'decon' led to the above reincarnation of the modernist 'style'—it would seem that this manoeuvring from one 'style' to another stems from simplistic oppositional thinking about terms such as Modernist and Postmodernist.

THE resemblance BETWEEN YOU AND andre is
 UNCANNY BECAUSE YOU BOTH are
 WEARING THE NEW AIR CHALLENGE FUTURE tennis shoe FROM NIKE WITH THE
 EXOSKELETAL STRAPPING AND THE HUARACHE-FIT™ INNERBOOT system WHICH MOLDS
 TO YOUR FEET AND YOU BOTH ENJOY THE BETTER LATERAL MOTION BECAUSE OF THE
 LONGITUDINAL FLEX LINES AND HERRINGBONE OUTSOLE AND YOU SHARE AN
 INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF cushioning HATS OFF TO THE NIKE-AIR® CUSHIONING IN THE
 HEEL AND FOREFOOT AND THERE ARE
 MYRIAD OTHER THINGS YOU HAVE IN COMMON LIKE
 THE FOOTFRAME™ DEVICE AND THE MIDEFT tension STRAP WITH
 RUGGED HOOK-AND-LOOP CLOSURE FOR INSTANCE AND

Let's FACE IT IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE HAIR
 AND THE earring AND THE WIMBLEDON
 CUP YOU GUYS COULD Be, Like,
 TWINS.










Fig. 23 David Carson, 'Nike Europe', advertisement, 1994, in
 Blackwell, L (1995) *The End of Print: The Graphic Design of*
 David Carson, London, Laurence King, no pagination

THE AIR STRUCTURE II running shoe from Nike has a thermoplastic Footbridge™ device for

IT HAS A HEEL CLEFT FOR STABILITY.
 IT HAS A SCULPTED MIDSOLE FOR STABILITY.
 IT IS THE MOST STABLE SHOE NIKE HAS EVER MADE. IT'S STABLE, OK? NOW WILL YOU RELAX?

RELAX

Fig. 24 David Carson, 'Nike Europe', advertisement, 1994, in
 Blackwell, L (1995) *The End of Print: The Graphic Design of*
 David Carson, London, Laurence King, no pagination

A more ambitious agenda

So, could it be possible to sidestep this repetitive 'life cycle of style' and engage beyond the 'surface' of the page? Birdsall (2004: vii–viii) suggests that 'a rigorous study of content' is crucial to producing a well designed book, but states that although this seems like common sense, 'it is surprisingly uncommon in book design'. Whilst Beirut (2004: np), responding to Bell's (2004: np) description of the two camps within graphic design as 'agents of neutrality' and 'aesthetes of style', calls for a 'third way', one which also suggests that design should be a response to content. Mermoz (1995, 1998, 2000, 2002 and Mau & Mermoz 2004) has provided a more theoretically led, challenge to typographers to fully engage with possibilities of a content driven approach to typography. Critical of what he describes as the 'retinal' state of graphic design and typography (1998, 2002, 2006), Mermoz also seeks to redefine the debate beyond 'surface pattern and complacent self-expression' (1998: 41). To do this Mermoz proposes to

conceptualise typography as a generative structure of meanings which, working in conjunction with other systems—such as the codes of language, rhetoric and stylistics—is capable not just of making a text legible, readable and/or visually attractive; but also, by working at the level of the text, of reinforcing the strategy of the text and extending its effects beyond mere visual appearance and ergonomic function. (Mermoz 2002: 1)

In this sense the text is defined 'as a semiotic object, rather than a mere physical entity' (Mermoz 2002: 1, see also van Leeuwen 2006: 144), with the typographic text working at two levels of denotation—the first being legibility, the second 'meanings and interpretation/s' (Mermoz 1995: np). This, suggests Mermoz (2002: 5), is 'typography as language in performance', but this is a performance that is at the service of the text, not one that engages in typographic pyrotechnics that obscure meaning—it is not from gazing at the page, but from reading the text that typography reveals its functionalities' (Mermoz 1998: 43). The role of the typographer

is to make explicit the strategy of the text and let meanings proliferate. At this point, the work of the typographer converges and coincides with Barthes' definition of reading. (Mermoz 2002: 5)

Here Mermoz is perhaps referencing Barthes' (1990: 4) notion of the writerly text, the goal of which is to position 'the reader no longer as a consumer, but as a producer of the text', with the writerly text plural in its interpretations and meanings. The idea of the open, writerly text, along with the *lexia*—a fragment of text that carries as many as three or four meanings (Barthes 1990: 13)—has also been widely used within hypertext; screen-based writing that functions in an interactive environment offering the reader a 'multi-linear or multi-sequential experience'. Hypertext 'blurs the boundaries between reader and writer' (Landow 1997: 4), enabling a new reading on each engagement, aligning with Massey's place as process idea and echoing Kitchin and Dodge's (2007) conception of mapping as process and the 'map spaces' of Del Casino & Hanna (2006). The prospect of a text reclaiming the sense of place that Ingold (2007) alleges is lost, and the reader being able to 'travel through it like an expedition' (Goebbels 1997: 63), seems a distinct possibility with this open, writerly approach.

Mealing (2003), whose interest is in the paralinguistic features of communication, would perhaps pejoratively describe the designer-led typographic interventions that Mermoz is proposing as intuitive. His proposition is that these features could be better represented typographically through the deployment of a computer-based system that would utilise colour, font size and weight. However, this approach would not necessarily engage with content, or engage at the 'level of the text'. It also mistakenly views such a 'hands on' engagement with content as intuitive—seeing intuition as something 'unscientific' and therefore best replaced by a more systematic approach. The approach taken in this research repositions that intuitive engagement as 'strategic', often drawing on tacit knowledge and capable of meaningful intervention, with typographic development starting from, and informed by the content. If the process does not begin with this there is every danger that the work produced may look 'experimental', but have no 'allegiance to linguistic meaning' (Drucker 1998: 20).

Mermoz's approach also moves the debate away from oversimplified references to Modernism and Postmodernism that have not only led to a perpetuation of stereotypes, but also caused a fundamental divide within graphic design and typography. It offers an opportunity to transcend such destructive dualisms and develop 'more artistically and intellectually ambitious forms of expressions' (Mermoz 2000: 152).

1.9 Conclusion

There are clear parallels evident between cultural geography and cartography, and graphic design and typography, with both disciplines exploring issues of representation and meaning. In graphic design much of the debate has been subsumed by the transitory nature of style. In geography the debate continues, but the medium of representation has shifted firstly from map to written representations, and latterly from writing to performance. These parallels not only highlight the individual problems, but also the potential for interdisciplinary work to offer a way forward—a productive synthesis of theory and practice from both graphic design and cultural geography.

‘Surface’ is problematic for both Ingold and Mermoz. Ingold’s description of the mute surface of the page (2007: 24–26) resonates with Mermoz’s (2002) discussions of the opportunity for typography to engage beyond the surface, and at ‘the level of the text’. This point of comparison perhaps offers the key to this research—getting beyond the surface—with a variety of surfaces needing to be addressed in both geographic and graphic terms. Firstly, the ‘surface’ of place—using Massey and Tuan’s approaches to place will ensure the research goes beyond simplistic, stereotypical responses to an area. One should bear in mind here that to go beyond the simplistic is not to search for a ‘truth’ underneath the ‘surface’, but rather to reveal the polyvocal, and sometimes contradictory, nature of place. This should feed into the second ‘surface’ for consideration—that of the visual representation of place in print. Through the designer’s interventions this ‘surface’ needs to bring to life the inhabited, open-ended nature of place, rather than disable it in the way that the traditional map does. Thirdly, and more specifically, the graphic and typographic interventions need to be made in such a way that they engage with the narratives of place in order to move beyond the ‘retinal surface’ of the text. Such a designed approach should enable the printed page to regain its voice and once again become a place that the reader moves through and interacts with. However, a balance will have to be struck within this work. As with a balance between process and pause in the ideas of Massey and Tuan, the design will need to engage the reader throughout, but also help them to negotiate and understand the complexities of both the designed artefact and place itself, rather than obscure it. As Benjamin has suggested, ‘there is all the difference in the world between the presentation of confusion and a confused presentation’ (Benjamin cited in Crang & Cook 2007: 201).

Penetrating the 'surface' of this research at all levels should enable the development of a sustained and productive geo/graphic design process, with regard to place. It also offers the opportunity to revitalise and add to a debate about typography that was prematurely curtailed, and derailed, by the vagaries of fashion in graphic design. In turn it will add to the debates regarding the visual representation of space within cultural geography perhaps enabling a change in the perception of print media. For graphic design, engaging with a discipline that has a long theoretical tradition could also be productive—the excuse of the 'young discipline' can only be proffered for so long. Interdisciplinary work such as this may enable a shift from the perspective of theory 'as an expendable adjunct, grafted onto practice' to the position of theory as an essential part of the design process (Mermoz 1995: np).

2

**Positioning the geo/graphic design process
within practice**

The approaches of specific practitioners and particular examples of graphic design and, to a lesser degree fine art, are discussed here in order to contextualise many of the issues raised in the previous chapter. As the development and testing of the geo/graphic design process draws on a wide range of methods, the following examples of practice have also been chosen to reflect these. Hence they are drawn together not through any similarities in terms of linked themes or use of media, but because each has a particular strategy that helps situate the methods and approaches used within this research and practice.

The chapter opens with a short account of the emotional mapping work of Christian Nold and the walks developed by walking artists walk walk walk. Both are highlighted for their participatory strategies with regard to engaging people with place in ways that enable place to be perceived afresh. In contrast, Nick Bell's *Humm compositions*; Lizzie Ridout's *Homeward Bound*; Walter Pamminger's work; and, that of the Fluxus art group do not use any such strategies, but do engender engagement and participation on the part of the reader through the design interventions undertaken to develop their visual and physical form. Although Rachel Lichtenstein's books *Rodinsky's Whitechapel* and *Add. 17469: A little dust whispered*, and *The New Cranbrook Design Discourse* (Aldersley Williams et al 1990) are what might be termed 'good design' in the sense that they use type, image and media in ways that are considered appropriate to the broad themes contained in each edition, they each reveal a formulaic approach when specifics are considered.

Bruce Mau is highlighted as a designer who successfully charts the contested waters of the 'designer as author'. Driven by concepts generated through a close engagement with the content of the work, Mau seeks to maximize the potential of the form and design of the book in relation to the reader's experience. Similarly, the prepared pages of the journal *Performance Research* attempt to explore and expand the boundaries of the printed page, offering their readers a creative space of interpretation that employs the page as a site of performance. Finally the discussion turns to *City of Signs*, a research project developed by Mermoz (2004) with the intention of redefining the role of graphic design as research and the graphic designer as reader. Closest in its outlook to this research, *City of Signs* is a useful point of comparison. The short conclusion draws together the analysis and evaluation of these examples; further clarifies

links between theory and practice; and, offers an opportunity to reflect on further areas for consideration within this research.

2.1 Participatory strategies

Christian Nold: Emotion maps

The artist Christian Nold creates maps that focus on one's emotional response to the urban landscape. He looks to 'people' his work, as people are central to cities yet rarely represented on traditional maps (Nold 2008). Nold's *Bio Mapping* (2004) is a participatory methodology, that engages technology to record an emotional response to place. Participants wear a galvanic skin response sensor that measures sweat levels, which is linked to a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit, enabling Nold to pinpoint changes in the body's skin conductivity with specific geographical locations. In his earlier, more simplistic visual reconstructions of this emotional landscape, areas of calm are represented as green dots or green typographic statements, and areas of excitement or stress, red (fig. 26). In later versions Nold uses Google Earth to produce the maps, using height as the indicator of arousal, with each participants' walk encoded by a different colour (fig. 27). On returning from their walk participants are asked to reflect on these differing areas of high excitement and try and remember what specifically triggered this response and this text is included with the graphical representation.



Fig. 26 Christian Nold 'San Francisco emotion map' (detail), 2007, available at www.biomapping.net

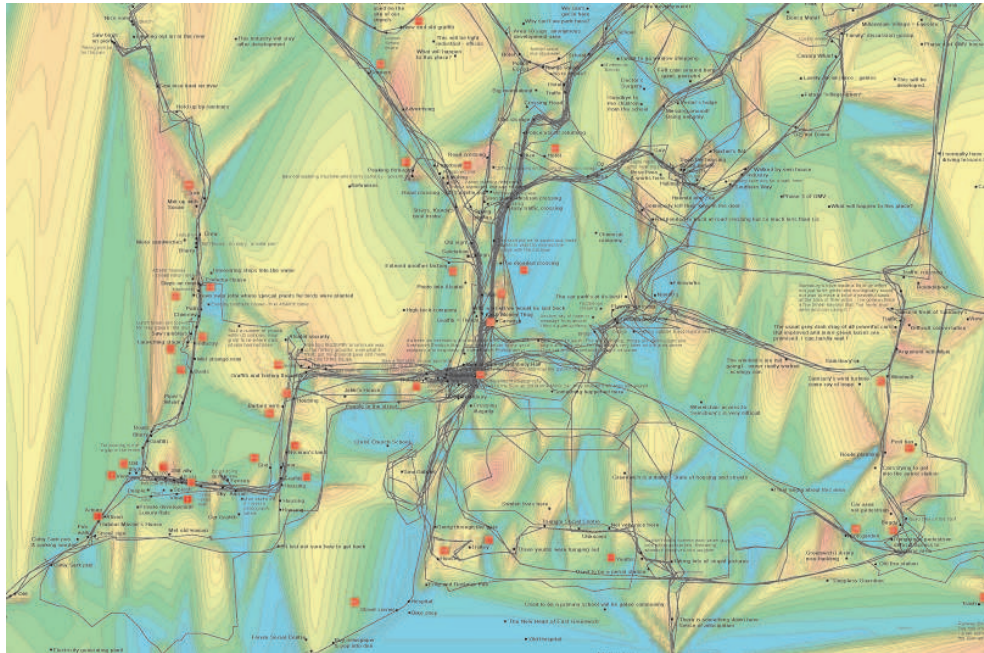


Fig. 27 Christian Nold 'Greenwich emotion map' (detail), 2005-6, available at www.biomapping.net

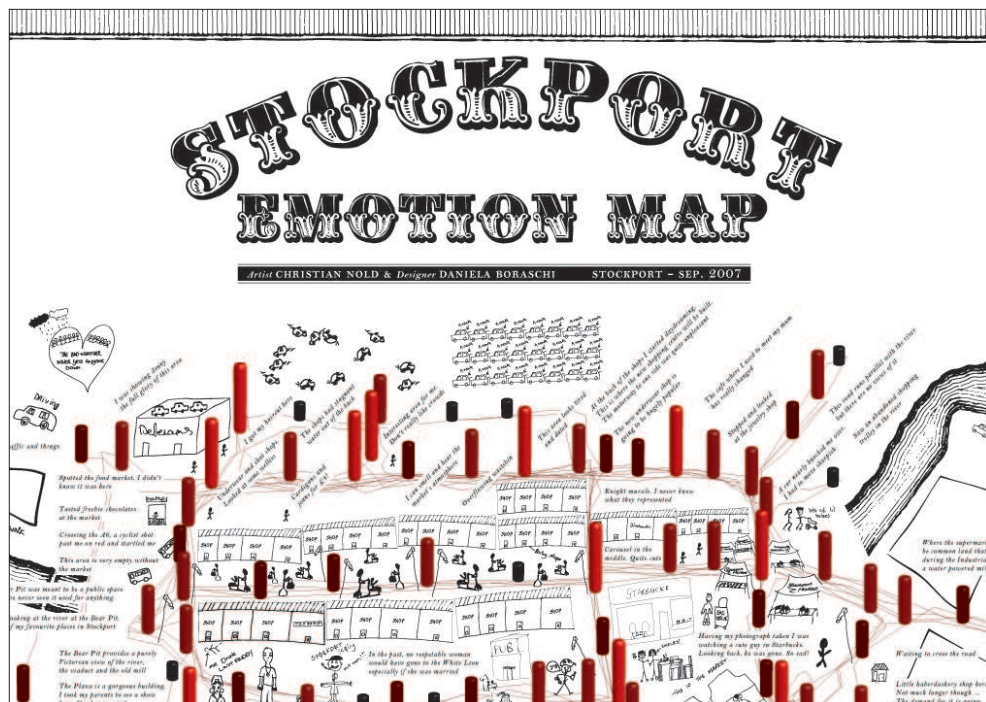


Fig. 28 Christian Nold 'Stockport emotion map' (detail), 2007, available at www.biomapping.net

The participatory methodology is particularly interesting in the way it enables a community to view their environment in a new way, and the maps are visually engaging—with some executed by a graphic designer (fig. 28). Nold (2008) states that he is ‘trying to see how far [he] can push data away from the expected representation’. However, I am unsure whether the format or execution always lends itself to the communication of these sensorial experiences, or the narratives behind the points of emotional intensity. Visualising data within the context of a map brings with it a raft of implicit expectation. One could argue that he is *détournant* the map, perhaps enabling non-traditional data to be taken more seriously through use of a ‘formal’ context. However this formal context sometimes negates the ‘peopling’ he attempts to achieve. For example, the Greenwich map aggregates all participants’ data, reflecting an overall landscape of emotion—this seems to negate the individual’s experience. The execution also references the contours of a traditional map, and this scientific ‘neutrality’ does not seem to communicate the human elements that are central to his mapping process.

walk walk walk: An archaeology of the familiar and forgotten

Gail Burton, Serena Korda and Clare Qualmann are the artists behind walk walk walk. Their practice, in this context, consists of a participatory live event, with a walk at its core. Their interests are in mundane everyday urban routines and their methodology developed from their own regular routes within their urban environment. By ‘stepping outside’ of the usual context of these journeys they were able to undertake them in a way that enabled them to see places in a new light and view the ‘narrative of pathways afresh’ (Qualmann 2005: np). Inspired by the *dérives* of the Situationists and Iain Sinclair, they initially explored parts of East London—Bethnal Green, Spitalfields and Whitechapel. These routes became the basis for their first event at the 2005 Design History Society Conference, *Locating Design*, held at London Metropolitan University in Whitechapel. Delegates received an envelope containing a map (with route inscribed on it), a tea token (redeemable en route), a pencil, and some labels (fig. 29). The instructions asked delegates to undertake all or part of the walk and to collect something whilst on their journey. These items were then labelled and displayed on the delegates return and contributed to the development of a ‘live archaeology’ of the walk (Burton et al 2005).



Fig. 29 walk walk walk conference pack, 2005

Since this first event, walk walk walk have developed a series of night walks within East London (2005-7), a chip shop walk within E8, Hackney (2007), and run similar events within the Chelsea Physic Garden (2007) and the city of Exeter (2007-8). Each event utilises the same approach, the handing over of 'their' routes to the participants who bring their own observations and interpretations to them. These interpretations and observations are recorded both photographically and textually and in turn re-inscribe place anew. Some of the participant's anecdotes have been made into fly-posters, and pasted onto walls on the routes, becoming part of it, intervening and contributing to the constant change of the environment and experience.

Many of the London walks are undertaken in areas that suffer from a certain amount of deprivation and take in rubbish strewn waste grounds, derelict buildings and uncared for railway sidings and underpasses. At night, such areas are traditionally seen as 'no go', and the communal night walks could be seen to 'reclaim' these places. However, there is a danger of rewriting these places in a nostalgic, mythologising way, and by exhibiting items from the walks as if in a gallery or museum, they could become 'aestheticised', with their original context lost.

So, it is the participatory methodological approaches of these artists, rather than the visual execution of the works, that are of primary interest within this research. Community participation offers an opportunity for residents to engage with place in new ways, and offers the artists a range of different insights into the space.

2.2 From representation to interpretation

Lizzie Ridout: Domestic archaeologist

During 2006 graphic designer Lizzie Ridout was the Pearson Creative Research Fellow at The British Library. During this time she was granted access to the library's collections, and, scouring them for domestic objects from the past, she sought strange references to both the everyday and the unusual. The residency culminated in the production of an artist's book—*Homeward Bound or An Exercise in Collecting Beginnings* (Ridout 2007). Ridout's work can be described as 'domestic archaeology' (Howlett 2007: np), with her inspiration found in mundane, everyday objects and rituals, and her work focusing on revealing hidden narratives. Ridout describes her research methods as eclectic, deliberately approaching material with an open mind, allowing connections to form spontaneously. Her design thinking and interventions clearly focus on developing ways of giving the reader or viewer an experience of these objects and occurrences that enable the familiar to be seen again as strange. The format of *Homeward Bound*—a collection of eclectically designed, loose-leaf elements contained in a paper folder—emphasises this (figs. 30–32). The viewer thus experiences a similar research process, and constructs their own collections and narratives within the loose leaves.

It is a space that is opened up to interpretation, making the reader an active participant in the process. One piece, entitled 'Thirteen things that I want to say' is tucked into the fold on the front of the book. This is both an explanation of the piece and of Ridout's work during the fellowship. Ridout speculates as to whether her process 'has been rather too arbitrary and I myself too easily seduced by a possibly irrelevant, and yet beautiful image or idea' (Ridout 2007). This statement highlights the tensions in Ridout's process and that of this research—how does one move between the arbitrary and the methodical, in a way that compromises neither position, but remains productive. There is perhaps a similarity here with the process of 'drifting purposely' (Sinclair 2003) and Pile's (2002) suggestion that it is a productive way of thinking about space differently. This productive sense of



Figs. 30 & 31 Lizzie Ridout (2007) **Homeward Bound or An Exercise in Collecting Beginnings**, London, British Library



Fig. 32 Lizzie Ridout (2007) **Homeward Bound or An Exercise in Collecting Beginnings**, London, British Library

'letting go' during the geo/graphic design process will be discussed further in chapter six. Ridout offers us a new way of seeing our own everyday lives, by reflecting them in everyday historical objects that today seem extraordinary.

Nick Bell: Humm compositions

In 1992 *Emigre* magazine devoted an issue to the work of British graphic designer Nick Bell, with a central feature being Bell's series of *Humm compositions*. Produced in response to a brief set for students at the then London College of Printing, where Bell was a part time tutor, the compositions consist of simple typographic statements such as 'This page is a door' (1992: 9) and 'This is the waiting room' (1992: 10) (figs. 33–34). The original brief (1992: 18–19) required students to produce 'typographic ramblings' that on the surface seem 'apparently lightweight', but on closer scrutiny reveal 'progressively deeply engraved meanings if the viewer/reader chooses to linger'. The compositions were to 'operate as a contrasting moment...within another publication', with the greatest impact achieved by positioning them alongside editorial and advertising.

Bell developed the brief in response to a perceived information overload and his view that much of the consumption of this information was unthinking. The *Humm compositions* were intended to 'provoke a participation with information that is other than consuming' (Bell 1992: 19). Bell also noticed a blurring of the divisions between editorial content and advertising, with many magazines now containing 'advertorials', and saw the *Humm compositions* as providing a focus that would separate the two more clearly. The format of *Emigre* at this time (28.5cm x 42.5cm) offered Bell a large space for composition, and the opportunity to use large point sizes in some pieces, enabling strong contrast with those that use a small point size, and with the body text on the facing page. The paper stock is a simple cream uncoated and not a particularly heavy weight. Because of this one is always aware of the following and previous pages, and this further enables the *Humm compositions* to interact with, and refer to, the content and process of reading.

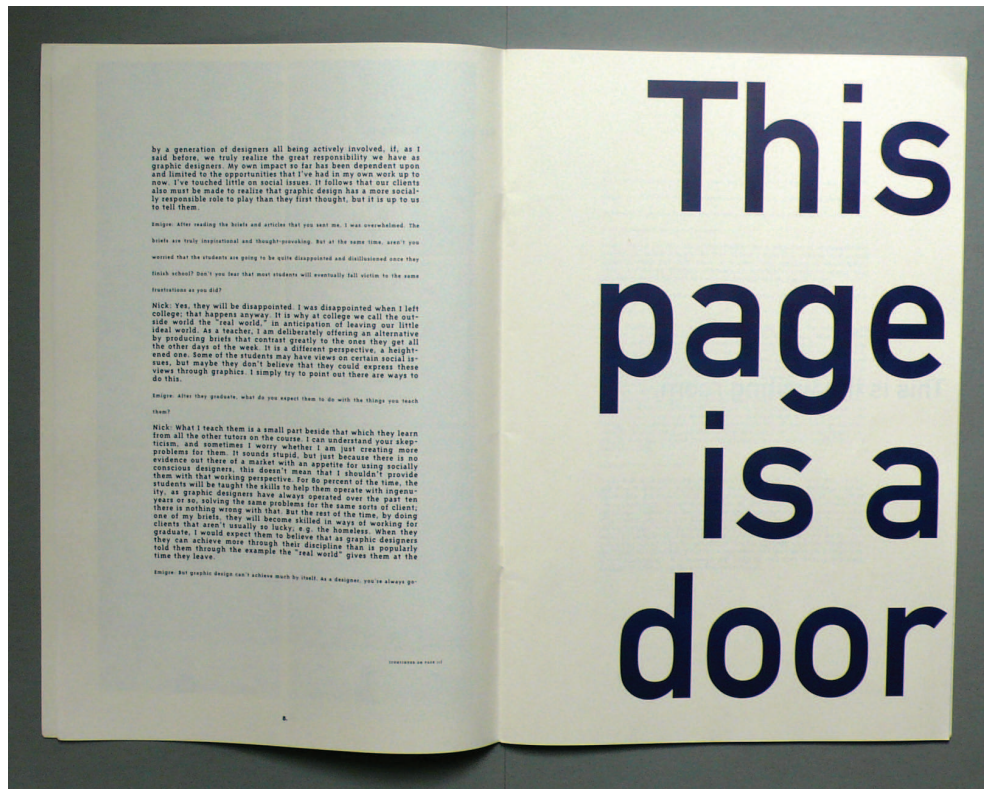


Fig. 33 Nick Bell 'Humm compositions' example, *Emigre*, Iss. 21, 1992, pp 8–9

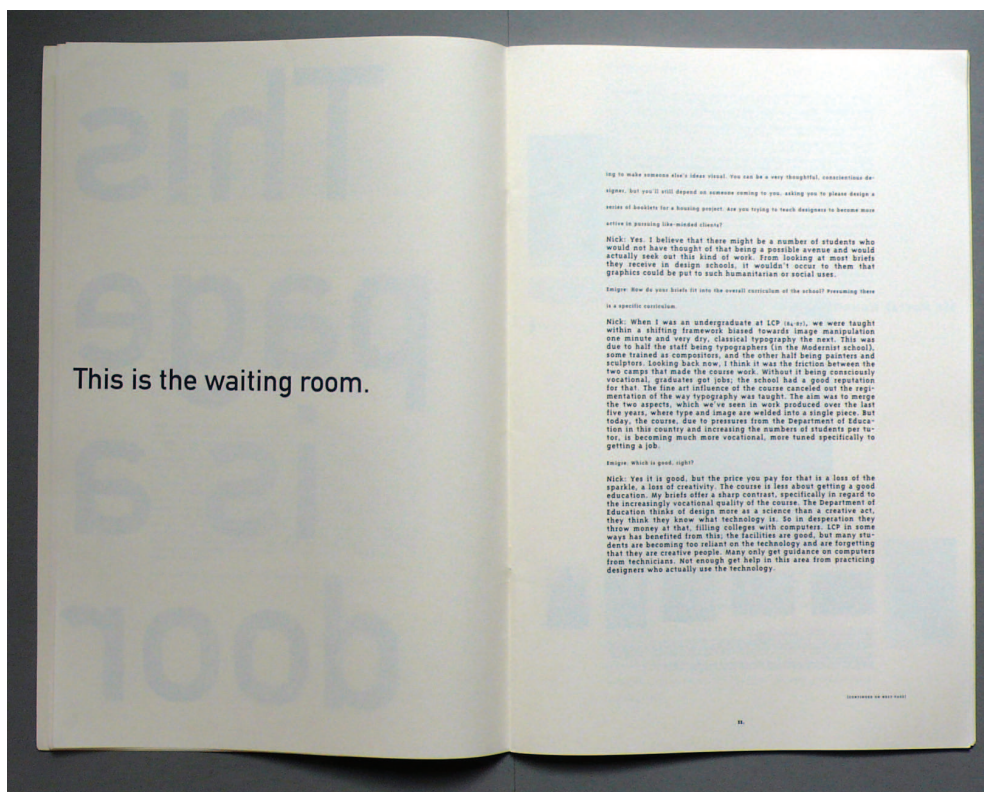


Fig. 34 Nick Bell 'Humm compositions' example, *Emigre*, Iss. 21, 1992, pp 10–11

Bell used the typeface *FF DIN* throughout—a contemporary version of *DIN 145*² that was designed in Germany in 1936 and used for road and railway signage. This gives the text a clarity and immediacy, enabling the message to take centre stage. Interestingly, Nowacek (2005: 163), in her discussion of the development of a methodology to establish the ‘character’ of a typeface, describes *DIN* as seeking ‘more risk, more “noise”, more opportunities to be perverse and uncomfortable’. Bell’s compositions give *DIN* this opportunity—the strange subliminal texts rendered in this open, friendly sans serif face, create a slightly unnerving combination, provoking one to ponder their placement and meaning.

The *Humm compositions* show the potential of language and typography to create interventions via the space of the page, particularly within the pages of a book or magazine. Disrupting the rhythm of that space with provocative typographic statements changes the reader’s interaction with the piece—slowing them down, speeding them up or getting them to revisit previous sections—directly affecting the temporal space of the magazine. This is not the usual ‘signposting’ of a document via traditional typographic hierarchies, but it is perhaps a subversion of these—the *Humm compositions* could be seen to function as a ‘pull quote’ focusing our attention on a key point, or perhaps as a section heading or chapter title. The difference with these quotes or titles, is that they don’t necessarily refer directly to the content itself, but rather to the process of reading and interaction with the material—they become a reflective tool.

Walter Pamminger: The signifying grid

For artists and photographers, composition is a vital part of the process by which meaning is structured. Underpinning the layout of much graphic design is a grid—a formal, mathematical structure that enables the systematic positioning of image and type. For pioneers of the grid, such as Müller-Brockmann (1996), it is a rational tool that enables the production of legible, ordered work. For Müller-Brockmann the primary concern, when discussing the construction of the grid, is the quantity of text and illustrative matter. The nature of the content is referred to briefly, but is overtaken by discussion of depth, width, harmony and clarity (Müller-Brockmann 1996: 49). Thus the grid exists as an invisible structure, devoid

2 DIN is the acronym of Deutsches Institut für Normung; the German Institute for Standardisation

of meaning. For Walter Pamminger, design has the potential to ‘not just shape content, but to actively create it’ (Abbott Miller 2004: 34). Abbott Miller suggests that to do this Pamminger uses what he terms a ‘signifying grid’, one that is made ‘vocal, visible and evident to the reader’. Pamminger is a ‘design intellectual who approaches his practice and writing as a form of research into... graphic design and “layout”’ (Abbott Miller 2004: 28), and describes himself as an author of ‘book concepts’ (Abbott Miller 2004: 30).

Perhaps because graphic design is not his primary profession³, Pamminger is able to adopt a position that sits somewhere between designer, editor and art director. From this position he ‘conceptualises the organisational strategy of a publication’, engaging with both structure and composition (Abbott Miller 2004: 30). These strategies or concepts are then realised by a graphic designer, who is often given the freedom to exercise her own judgement with regard to the specifics of ‘spacing, proportion and typography’ (Abbott Miller 2004: 30). Readers are occasionally given a note of explanation about the format thus enabling them to understand the issues that have led to its design (figs. 35–36). Pamminger sees the layout of a publication as having the potential to bring a further reading of a situation, not just passively re-presenting text and images received from the author. In fact he has stated that ‘representation is so much more interesting than the real thing’ (Abbott Miller 2004: 34). The intention to go beyond the re-presentation challenges the perceived problem of ‘after words’ (Dirksmeier & Helbrecht 2008: 10) and suggests a strategy for the re/presentation of place within this research.

Fluxus: Interpretation through interaction

Fluxus—a loose group of experimental artists, designers and composers—was established in the early 1960s and looked to ‘erase the distinction between art and everyday life’ (Triggs 1992: 47). George Maciunas, one of the forerunners in the group, had trained in architecture, art and graphic arts, and is seen as the ‘primary graphic designer of Fluxus’ printed works (Triggs 1992: 48). It was Maciunas who designed the first ‘Fluxkit’—Fluxus 1. Fluxkits (boxes containing objects, visuals and essays) offered a multi-sensory experience for the receiver (fig. 37). Items in Fluxus 1 included a song with words and melody, a napkin, a latex glove, photographic portraits, performance and music scores, and visual and sound poems. This

3 Pamminger trained as a chemist and holds a full time research position within the Austrian patent office.

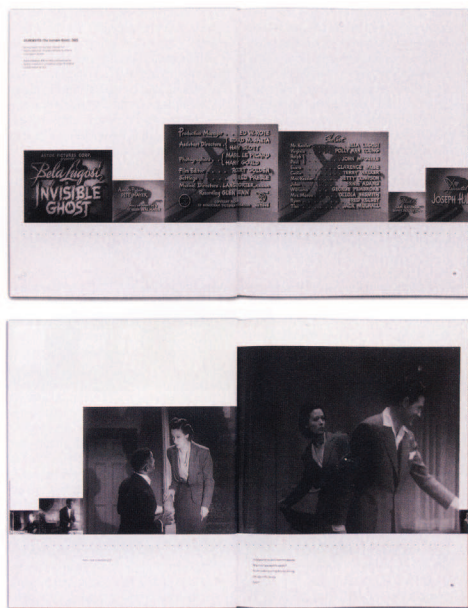


Fig. 35 Walter Pamminger & Anna Bertemann: Martin Arnol, *Deanimated*, 2003, in Homola, W (2010) 'Interview with Walter Pamminger', *Typo*, no. 41, pp 44–51. A movie is represented diagrammatically in its entire length, visualising the length of each scene by the size of the respective selected film frame. One spread corresponds to one minute of film.



Fig. 36 Walter Pamminger, Andreas Pawlik & Juliane Sonntag, 2010, in Homola, W (2010) 'Interview with Walter Pamminger', *Typo*, no. 41, pp 44–51. A group exhibition catalogue orchestrated as a fictitious cinematographic tour through the exhibition based on oscillations between close-ups and long shots of the exhibits.

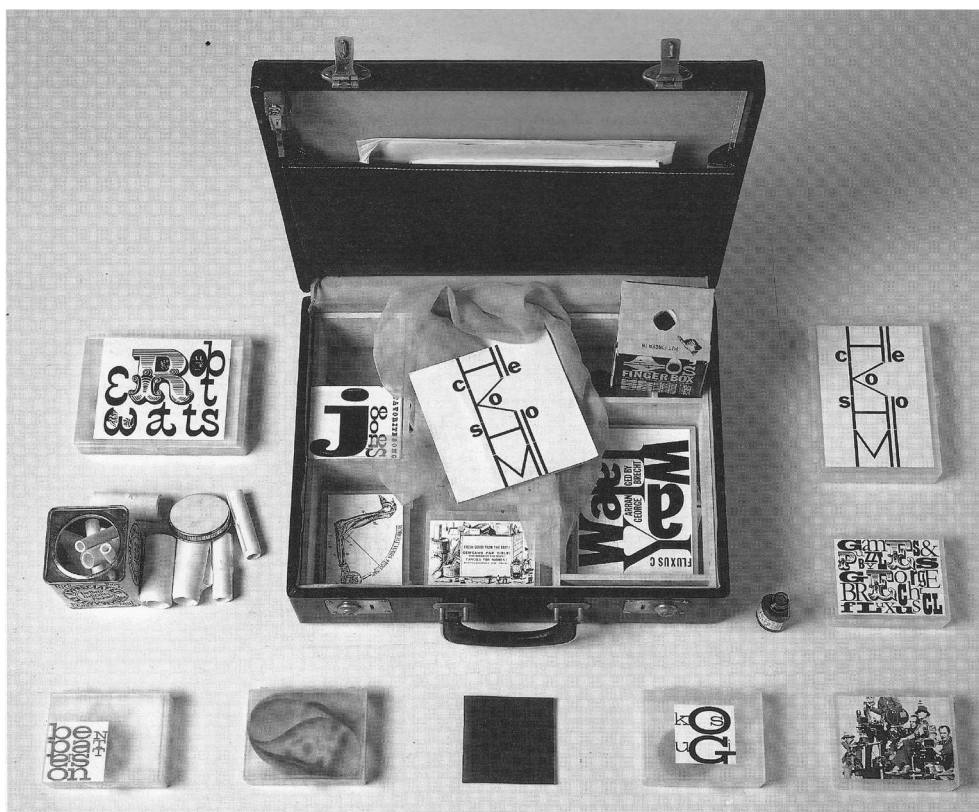


Fig. 37 Fluxkit, 1964, in Kellein, T (1995) *Fluxus*, London. Thames & Hudson, p.50

eclectic mix of items engages all the senses and uses the whole body of the 'performer' (Reed 2002: 34). Therefore, instead of being an artwork 'about' or 'of' something, the experience of the kits actually was the art.

Central to all Fluxus work was the reader, spectator or participant. The work is deemed to be 'interactive' in the sense that the reader interacts with ideas and possibilities, rather than the work transmit 'some unadulterated information from the mind of an author... to the eyes of a spectator' (Saper 1998: 137). Barthes (1977: 142–8) states that the key to any text is the reader, not the author, and that 'a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination'. It is the reader that brings prior knowledge, cultural references and understanding to the text and creates its 'meaning'. The words themselves are simply a 'tissue of signs' whose meaning is in constant deferral. (Higgins 2002: 36). Once again this approach challenges the perceived problems of representation (Dirksmeier & Helbrecht 2008: 10) and it is the interventions of artist or designer that provoke the reader's interaction. The primary information and experience of the Fluxkits enable them to neatly sidestep the traditional 'signifying chain often applied to visual art' (Higgins 2002: 36) and therefore exist in the moment rather than as 'after words'.

2.3 Style or substance?

Rachel Lichtenstein: Rodinsky's Whitechapel (1999)

The subject matter of Lichtenstein's *Rodinsky's Whitechapel* is David Rodinsky, who disappeared from his attic room in Whitechapel in 1969. In 1980 the room was found with nothing disturbed—even an imprint of his head on the pillow. The book functions as a guidebook to a walk in the area, including important sites from Rodinsky's life. The book, designed by Mark Diaper of Eggers & Diaper, is small in format and uses a thick cream cotton stock—it fits in one's hand when undertaking the walk, and has the sense of a small diary containing personal secrets. This sense of the personal is further developed by the use of photographic imagery of both the room and pieces of ephemera found within it. These elements are shown on a surface of crumpled paper, and as one turns the page, the light shows through and text from the reverse can be seen. This creates a layered, ghostly affect, resonating with both the story and the palimpsest-like nature of the changing Whitechapel landscape. Rodinsky was allegedly acting as a caretaker for a synagogue at the time of his disappearance, and, along with the use of a restrained serif font, and the use of red text for

section numbers and quotes, the thin bible paper interspersed throughout lends the book a religious feel (figs. 38–40).

So, it would seem that the subject matter and its execution are a good example of design interventions reflecting and contributing to the interpretation of the narrative. That is until one is aware of the outcome of Lichtenstein's creative research fellowship at the British Library—*Add. 17469: A Little Dust Whispered* (1987). Lichtenstein became fascinated with traces of the writers evident in the physicality of the ancient texts held within the library collections. She began to isolate sections and photograph and then enlarge the texts so they became almost abstract images. The book combines such images alongside Lichtenstein's notes and written responses by library staff members and visitors to the initial exhibition. Designed once again by Diaper, the format is small, using cream cotton stock, and employing red typographic quotes on thin bible paper (Gerber 2004) that change the pace of the book—all appropriate for the 'mood' of the piece, but with the two books side by side, *Rodinsky's Whitechapel* is revealed as formulaic. It takes a 'macro' view, engendering responses to broad themes of disappearance and ghostly traces, rather than dealing with a 'micro' view of the specificity of Rodinsky's life within Whitechapel.

The New Cranbrook Design Discourse

A similar criticism could be levelled at *The New Cranbrook Design Discourse* (Aldersley Williams et al 1990), a collection of essays that explore the teaching philosophy and practice at the institution. This is perhaps surprising, as Cranbrook Academy of Art were at the forefront of the typographic revolution within graphic design, and the then chairs of the design department, Katherine and Michael McCoy, encouraged the exploration of post-structuralist literary theory in the context of graphic design. However, unlike the previous example that only reveals its formulaic nature when placed next to the other work, these essays sit side by side in a collection, so the similarities are immediately evident. The typographic treatment of each essay, apart from that by the McCoys, is the same. The main disruption to the text is the reduction of the size of the gutter between the two columns on the page. This momentarily confuses the reader—it is not immediately clear if one is supposed to read down each column or across the gutter—but once the first sentence is read it becomes clear that the text continues across the gutter (figs. 41–42). This system then continues for the whole of each essay. The design of the

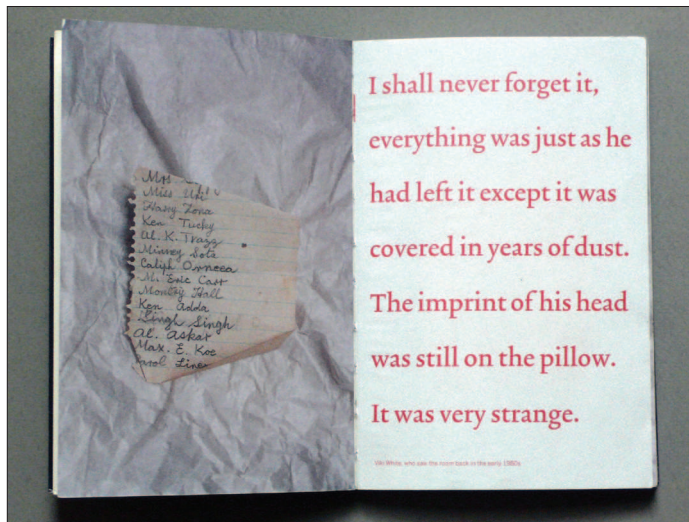


Fig. 38 Rachel Lichtenstein (1999) *Rodinsky's Whitechapel*, London, Artangel, pp.8-9

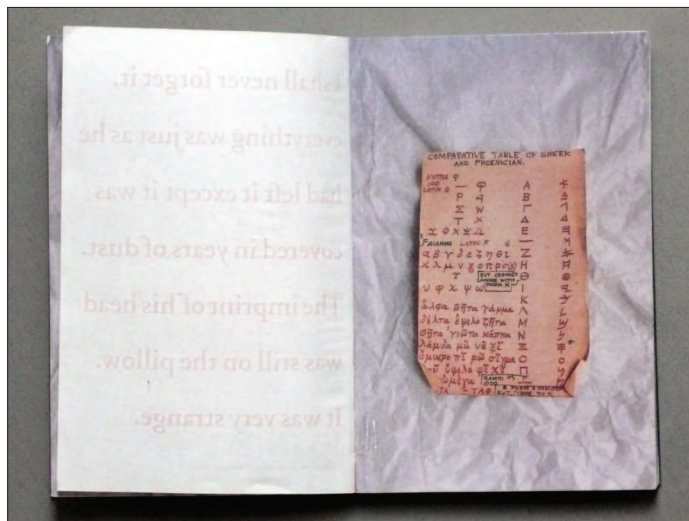


Fig. 39 Rachel Lichtenstein (1999) *Rodinsky's Whitechapel*, London, Artangel, pp.10-11

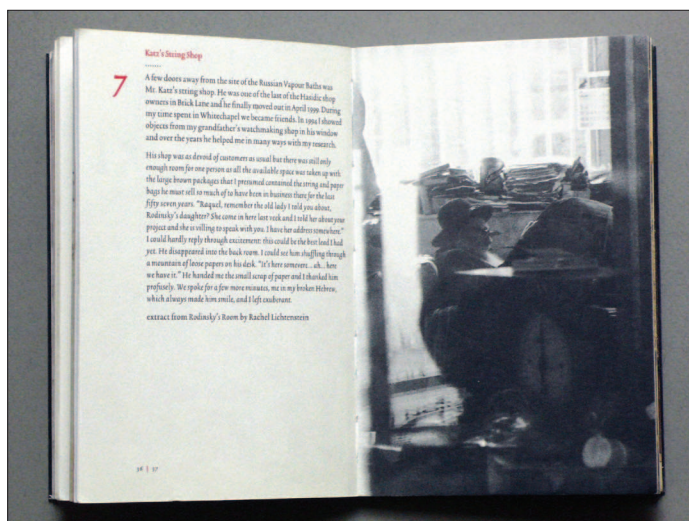


Fig. 40 Rachel Lichtenstein (1999) *Rodinsky's Whitechapel*, London, Artangel, pp.36-37

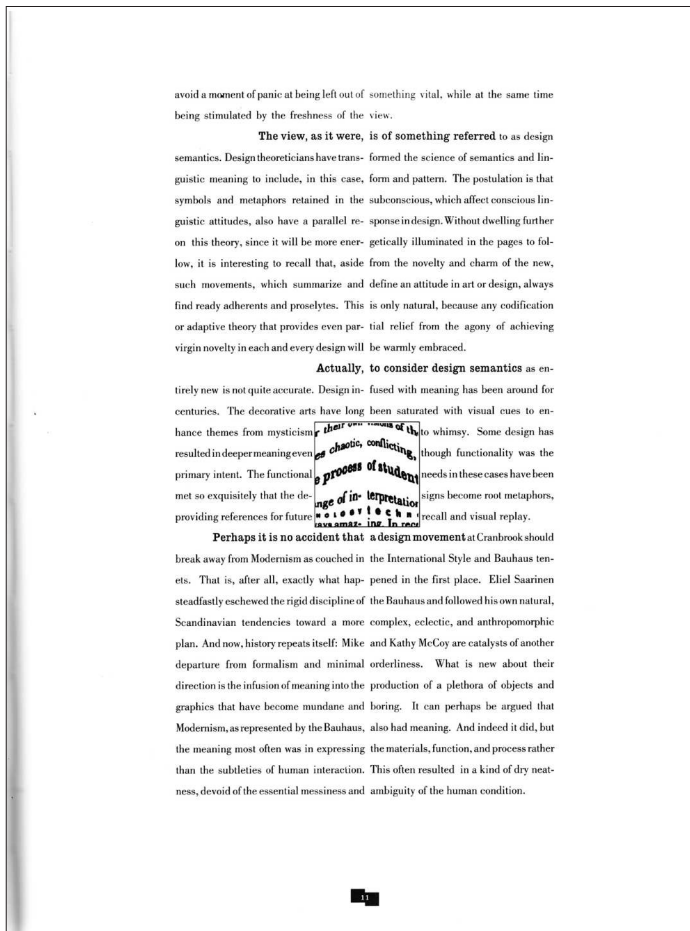


Fig. 41 Aldersley Williams, H (ed) (1999) *Cranbrook Design: The New Discourse*, New York, Rizzoli, p.11

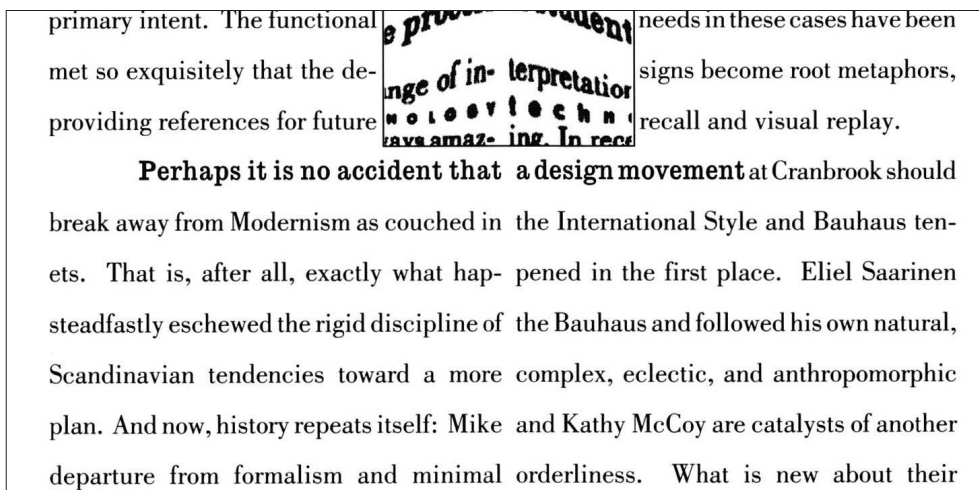


Fig. 42 Aldersley Williams, H (ed) (1999) *Cranbrook Design: The New Discourse*, New York, Rizzoli, p.11 (detail)

essay by the McCoys continues the small gutter, but aligns the right hand column of text approximately two millimetres below the left. This means the reader not only has to read across the gutter, but negotiate a slight 'step down' as they go. The leading is greater within this essay and this enables the placement of a series of oppositional words, such as art/science, visual/verbal and objective/subjective, between the lines of text at pertinent places within the essay (figs. 43–44).

Mermoz (1995: np) suggests that the design is 'appropriate to the generic content of the text', but it does not address the specifics. He describes the outcome as

a meta-typography, self conscious and critically aware of its conventions, which focuses the attention of its (typographically aware) readers on the effects and implications of typographic expectations, conventions and transgressions (Mermoz 1995: np).

This is not to suggest that the two works under question in this section are poorly designed from an aesthetic point of view—they both display a strong use of design and typography. However, they both take a surface level, generic view with regard to the productive interplay of form and content. As Mermoz (Mau & Mermoz 2004: 35) says of *The New Cranbrook Design Discourse* 'it does not seem to go beyond disrupting the reading process, elegantly, but ultimately, limited in scope'. For this research and practice to go beyond the 'surface' of place, and beyond the 'macro' stereotypical, sweeping statements about Hackney and its residents, the 'micro' will need to be addressed.

2.4 Designer as author

Bruce Mau: Producer as author?

Canadian graphic designer, Bruce Mau, is cited as one of the 'earliest, most self-aware and deliberate exponents' of the idea of the 'designer as author' (Poynor 2003: 121). Mau draws on Benjamin's (1934) text, stating that he wanted to step into the role of 'the producer as author' (Poynor 2003: 121), and that he is interested in

expanding and extending the role of the designer to include the substance of the message itself. The content—what is being said—is the trigger for form. Our goal is to produce an environment of collaboration for the development and integration of content and form (Mau 2000: 321).



Fig. 43 Aldersley Williams, H (ed) (1999) *Cranbrook Design: The New Discourse*, New York, Rizzoli, p.15

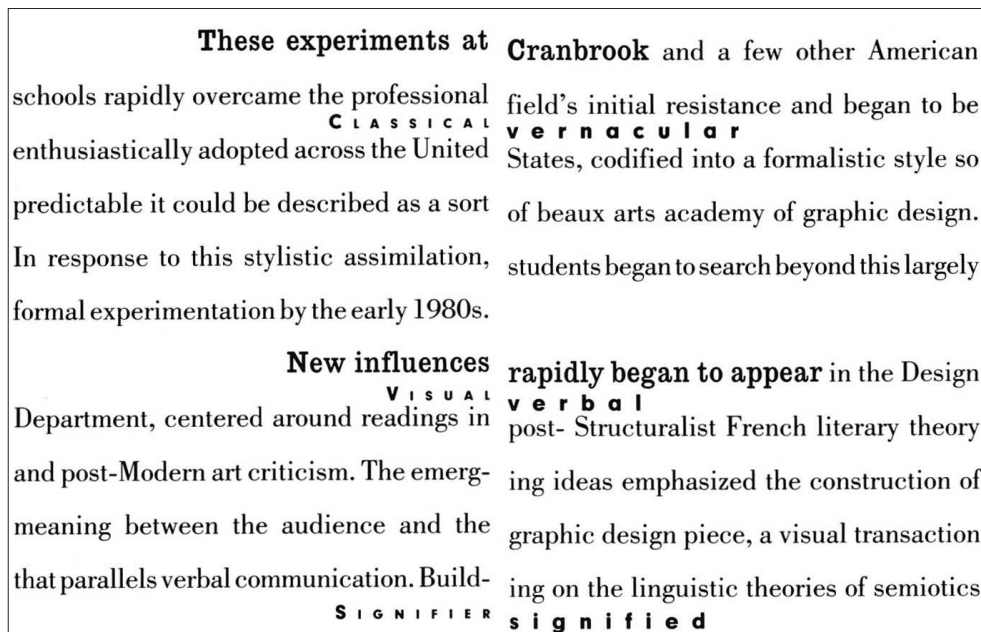


Fig. 44 Aldersley Williams, H (ed) (1999) *Cranbrook Design: The New Discourse*, New York, Rizzoli, p.15 (detail)

Thus, the designer and author, and ‘the creation of content and form are in dialogue from the start’ and it is the ‘separation and tension’ between the designer and author’s pathways that ‘generates ideas and qualities that could be produced in no other way’ (Mau 2000: 327). Perhaps the clearest example of this process is the book *S, M, L, XL* (Koolhaas & Mau 1995), a monograph of architect Rem Koolhaas. Mau spent five years working on the project, eventually designing 1,344 pages and being acknowledged as co-author. Poynor describes the book as unfolding ‘with a cinematic momentum’ and suggests that ‘Mau’s visualization endows this daunting mass of material with a structural presence that far exceeds an ordinary monograph’s’ (Poynor 2003: 122–123). Clearly Mau has an ‘ownership’ of such projects that is beyond that of a ‘normal’ designer-client relationship—one that he describes as ‘a kind of karaoke existence, always singing someone else’s song, and never saying what he thinks should be said’ (Novosedlik 1994: 48). Novosedlik is cynical of Mau’s stance as ‘author’, suggesting that paradoxically, such collaboration with the ‘real’ author reduces the designer’s ‘original creative voice’ (Novosedlik 1994: 53). This is perhaps a grey area, and an argument that is circular in nature, but what is clear is that Mau is committed to extending the remit of design. His approach is intellectually rigorous, and he believes that form and content should be inextricably linked, so that ‘for the viewer something happens and for the reader another thing happens’ (Mau & Mermoz 2004: 33).

From the perspective of this research it is Mau’s attempts to develop an extended ‘experience’ in his book design—through his symbiotic engagement with form and content—that is of particular interest. Mau suggests that a book unfolds in a ‘temporal dimension’ and that to design books one must have ‘a kind of temporal sense’, a ‘sense for rhythm and cadence’ (Mau & Mermoz 2004: 33). This is a similar proposition to Carrion (2001: np) who sees the book thus:

A book is a sequence of spaces. Each of these spaces is perceived at a different moment—a book is also a sequence of moments... Written language is a sequence of signs expanding within the space; the reading of which occurs in time. A book is a space-time sequence.

Indeed, the job of a book designer could, in its widest sense, be described as ‘a space-time problem’ (Hochuli 1996: 35). One example that shows the extent of Mau’s contributions and his proactive engagement in the design

process is *Zone 6*. In *Zone 6: Incorporations*, Mau collaborated with editor Sanford Kwinter, and their intention was to make a book that ‘behaved like a living thing’, frozen at the last moment possible by the print process, but able to come to life again in the hands of the reader (Mau 2000: 176). The design interventions are numerous on this project. For example, the cover runs for a total of 22 pages—16 at the front, six at the back—acting like ‘the opening and closing credits of a film’; the grid for *Incorporations* was simply the space of the page (fig. 45) as Mau wanted to escape the ‘privileging’ of certain points on the page and see every part of the space capable of an equal contribution to the design; and, to organise the volume, they developed the ‘constant total length approach’—imagining the book as a piece of string of a finite length and approaching the design of the book by focusing on each section’s relationship to the rest of the content—as if each were a part of the length of the string (fig. 46) (Mau 2000: 176–196).

Information is expected to travel within this formulation.
Every time you ‘pull’ one section, it ripples through the book,
particularly affecting those elements in close proximity (Mau
2000: 196).

An overall approach to the use of colour is informed by the musical term *klangfarbenmelodie*—a carefully arranged succession of different tone ‘colours’ within a musical composition. This led to the design of the book maintaining a constant ‘pitch’ through a consistent use of tone, and a changing ‘timbre’ through the use of different hues of colour (fig. 47) (Mau 2000: 200–204). Mau attempts to engage with content and design in such a way as to extend the author’s original text through offering the reader multiple levels, or openings, through which to engage with the work.

It is about the jump from one thing to another, the spaces
that are left open. It is not about filling every last bit; it’s about
opening space (Mau & Mermoz 2004: 34).

It is clear Mau has been given an enormous amount of flexibility in his work with *Zone*—a luxury rarely afforded to many designers—and the collaborative approach has developed over 19 years. The nature of *Zone*’s publishing, and its target audience, is also critical to the development of such a relationship. *Zone* publishes a range of books that deal with

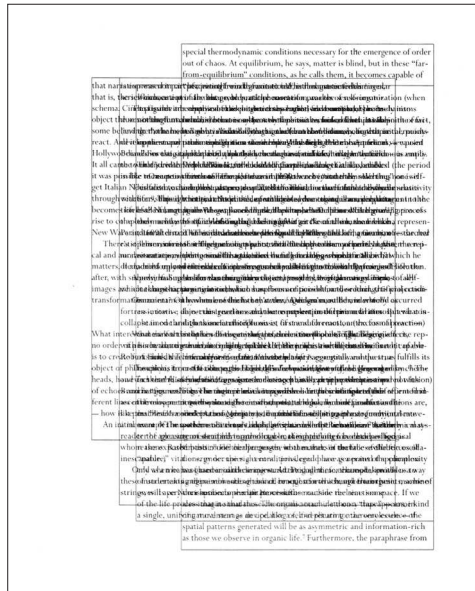


Fig. 45 Bruce Mau, grid design for 'Incorporations', 1992, in Mau, B (2000) *Lifestyle*, London, Phaidon, p.193

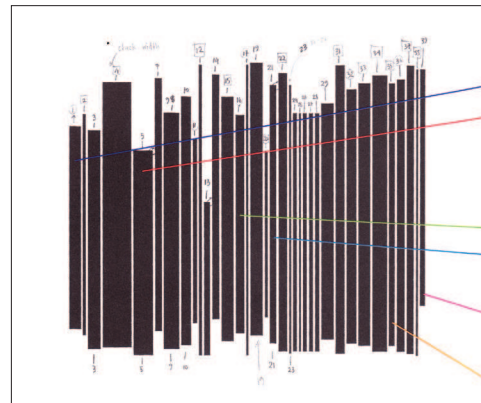


Fig. 46 Bruce Mau, constant total length diagram for 'Zone 6', 1992, in Mau, B (2000) *Lifestyle*, London, Phaidon, p.196



Fig. 47 Bruce Mau, Klangfarbenmelodie layout concept for 'Zone 6', 1992, in Mau, B (2000) *Lifestyle*, London, Phaidon, p.202

social, cultural and philosophical issues, including works from a range of European thinkers such as Guy Debord and Gilles Deleuze. The nature of the work therefore means those that purchase the books are likely to be the type of audience that would respond well to a thoughtful, content driven design, which could extend their experience of the work.

However, even Mau concedes that readers do not ‘immediately register the book’s many layers’ and suggests that to some extent the work ‘unfolds on a subliminal level...beneath the threshold of conscious perception’ (Mau 2000: 204). On viewing a copy of *Zone 6* my experience is that the design interventions Mau has made are not immediately obvious, in fact, one is perhaps more likely to notice them if one treats the weighty tome as a flick book, as many of the visual concepts unfold gradually throughout the pages. Perhaps this is as it should be, that the hand of the designer should not be overtly present within the text itself, but it does seem that the work may take on meaning only after the explanation. With most design artefacts it is unlikely that the reader will be privy to this explanation so the conceptual element will remain, in a sense, de-activated. In this research and practice, perhaps one of the keys is to reference everyday elements from place that trigger personal recognition in the mind of the reader, rather than abstract concepts, such as *klangfarbenmelodie*, that is likely to mean little to many people. However, Mau, Carrion and Hochuli’s idea of the book as a temporal space is a productive concept with which to explore and re/present place through design interventions, in relation to Massey’s idea of process and Tuan’s notion of pause.

2.5 From theory to practice

Clare MacDonald: Curating for the page

The postmodern, performative nature of the book and the page are central to Clare MacDonald’s thinking. MacDonald edits the journal *Performance Research*, which was launched in the mid 1990s at a time when the possibilities of print were being overshadowed by the advent of new media.

Hard copy suddenly felt limited and prescriptive, forcing the reader into a passive mode of textual consumption. Paper was out, the dynamic, interactive, world of virtuality was in.
(MacDonald 1999: 60)

However, the editorial team chose to use that standpoint productively, seeing the page as ‘a bounded piece of space-time which has to engage the reader/viewer with a range of conventions which can be ignored or creatively disrupted’, essentially engaging the page as a site of performance itself (MacDonald 1999: 60). Not all the pages in the journal are used in this way, but those that are—the ‘prepared pages’—involve collaboration between designers, artists and writers, and enable the representation of an artist’s performance in print (figs. 48–49). Such representations either extend the original performance, can be read alongside it, or offer further insights into it (MacDonald 1999: 62).

The editors sometimes have difficulty in knowing whether to provide a ‘guide’ to the prepared pages for the reader, more often tending not to, judging that ‘feeling one’s own way is part of allowing the work to stand for itself’ (MacDonald 1999: 62). The issue of a guide is perhaps emphasised more as *Performance Research* is an academic publication, and as such, perhaps carries a particular expectation in terms of conventions of format and typography. These ‘disruptive’ pages and the lack of a guide places the reader centre stage with the writer and designer, enabling them to perform ‘the page together’, all three ‘contributors to meaning’ MacDonald (2003: np).

Like Pamminger’s work, the design interventions within the prepared pages are made with the aim of going beyond a simple ‘re-enactment’ of the performance within the page, and seeing the page as a performance itself seems to move beyond the issue of ‘after words’ (Dirksmeier & Helbrecht 2008: 10) and offers an interesting model for addressing the theoretical and practical divide in this context that is of concern to Nash (2000: 657).

City of Signs

Based in Istanbul, and inspired by Calvino’s (1997) *Invisible Cities*, Mermoz’s *City of Signs*—a collaboration with Istanbul Bilgi University—explores the potential of ‘graphic forms of representation to open up new dimensions in the production of insights/knowledge’ (Mermoz 2004c: 1). To test the following propositions—‘The city must never be confused with the words that describe it’ (Calvino 1997: 61); interpretation is impossible as each sign triggers off another sign, ad infinitum (Mermoz 2004a: 37); and, an encounter with the ‘true city’ is an ‘epistemological impossibility’

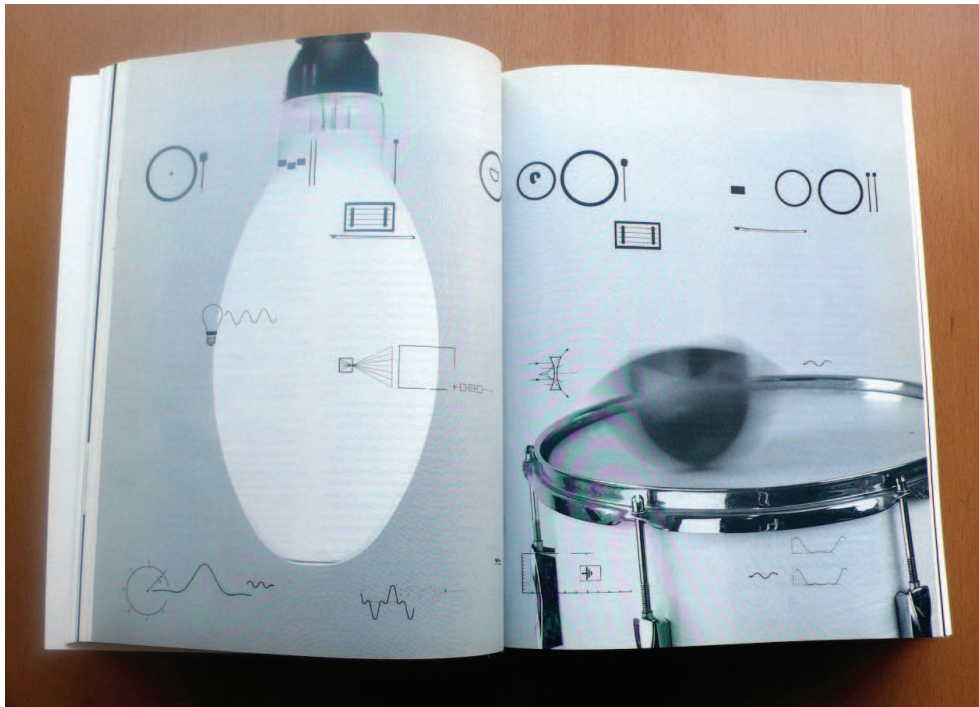


Fig. 48 Prepared pages, Vorfeld, M, 'Son et lumière, *Performance Research*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1997, pp.66-67

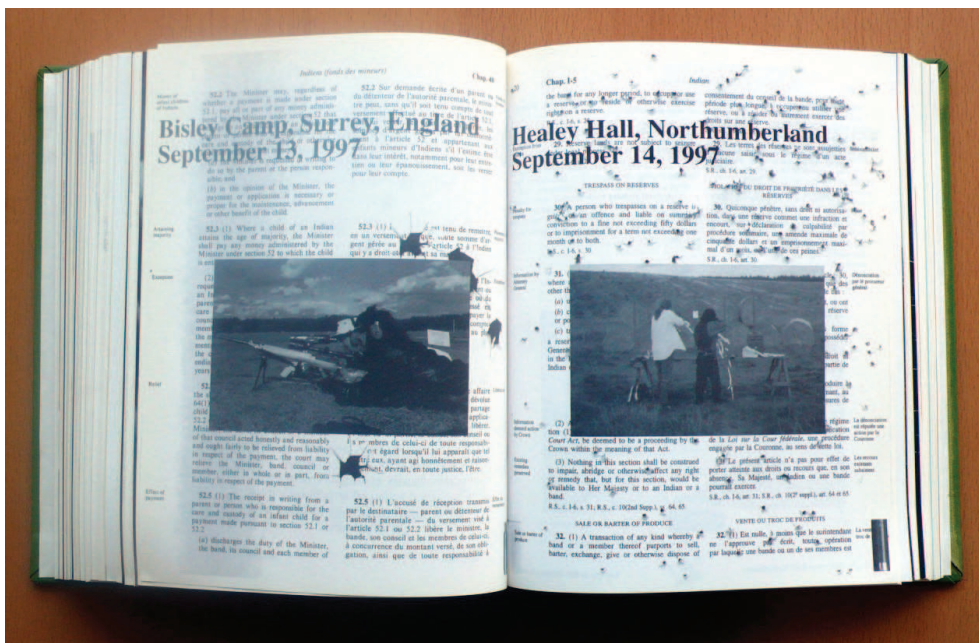


Fig. 49 Prepared pages, Yuxwelupton, L P, 'An Indian act', *Performance Research*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 1998, pp69-72 (pp70-71 illustrated)

(Mermoz 2004b: 40)—the researchers spent ten days in Istanbul ‘observing, discussing, recording and documenting’ their impressions. They sought areas, outside of tourist guides, that aligned to their own research interests, developed during the months previous to the residency, using the material they gathered to ‘articulate’ their own ‘readings’ of the city (Mermoz 2004a: 37).

The project ‘set out to redefine graphic design as research, and the graphic designer as reader’ (Mermoz 2004a: 37). In discussion with Bruce Mau, Mermoz raised the idea of ‘designer as reader’ as a way of designers being able to develop work that goes beyond that which is purely ‘retinal’—to work ‘at the level of the text’ in such a way that both content and form are utilised in a productive way (Mau & Mermoz 2004: 33). Here Mermoz makes another attempt to move debates within graphic design (such as the ‘designer as author’) ‘away from polemics’, or simplistic arguments about style and taste, and towards a ‘critical practice’, encompassing a broad critical attitude—critically defining one’s socio-cultural and political objectives through to the design languages and methodologies that one uses. This shifts graphic design from a communicative tool to ‘an instrument for the production and communication of knowledge’, presupposing collaboration with other disciplines (Mermoz 2006: 77).

The work created was not to be treated as ‘art or design objects’, as for Mermoz, ‘form always is a means of generating insights. It is the ‘referential value’ that is most important, not the artistic value’ (Mermoz 2004b: 52). Viewers were invited ‘to engage with the rhetoric’ of the ‘propositions’, which were deliberately created in such a way as to avoid making definitive statements or enabling the drawing of a ‘readymade conclusion’. These ‘open’ works required the viewer to ‘extrapolate’ their own conclusions (Mermoz 2006: 85). The intention was not to present a complete picture of the city, but a ‘collection of fragments’ that tested their hypothesis: ‘what contributions could graphic designers working as readers and as authors make...’ (Mermoz 2004a: 37). These fragments, according to Mermoz (2003: 3), offer an opportunity to critically reflect on the processes and potential limitations of ‘representation and interpretation’, and focus on the ‘cultural and semiological bases upon which we read images and sounds’.

Suggesting that graphic designers need to acknowledge, and learn from, ‘the complexity of the processes and situations they address’, Mermoz draws on Bourriaud’s (2002) ‘relational aesthetics’ as a useful starting point. Writing within the context of fine art, Bourriaud (2002: 21) states that transivity ‘is a tangible property of the artwork’ and that ‘producing a form is to invent possible encounters’. There is a similarity here to Crouch’s (2010) discussion of the performative nature of artworks. However, the ‘encounters’ that Bourriaud refers to are not simply between the viewer and the work, but are between groups of viewers as they gather together in galleries. With much graphic design work, and books in particular, the encounter is of a more singular nature. I understand Mermoz’s use of Bourriaud to attempt to make his point, but is this a new view or just a new context in which to discuss the potential of design to engage the reader and create interaction of some sort? I am unsure whether it will further Mermoz’s quest to develop the discipline. There seems to be a more fundamental problem at the heart of things—the divide between theory and practice.

Mermoz (2006: 77) acknowledges that his previous attempts to raise ‘the intellectual level of the typographic debate’ have failed. He suggests his terms of reference were outside those of the majority of designers, who remained entrenched in a simplistic Modernist/Postmodernist debate. This may be true, but I suspect one of the reasons why his writing was difficult to engage with, is that it remained just that, writing. He offered few visual examples, so it was perhaps easy for some to dismiss it as a purely academic argument that had no basis in practice. *City of Signs* attempts to address this, and is articulated both through text and image, yet much of the work shown seems to have little or no basis in the traditional realm of graphic design. Photography is prevalent, and Mermoz himself produced a sound piece (Mermoz 2004d). This is not to suggest that graphic design cannot learn from other disciplines. On the contrary, youthfulness is often cited as a problem within the development of a research agenda, and such interdisciplinary theoretical exploration can be profoundly useful. However, it needs to underpin a practice that is recognisably within the broad discipline graphic design or it is in danger of undermining the subject. Mermoz himself states that ‘*Istanbul Diary* situates itself in the tradition of Travel Writing, which it transposes into Fine Arts’ (Mermoz 2004b: 62). The assumption could be that graphic design does not offer the

potential to execute such a project. Thus the potential of graphic design to act as research, and its artefacts to engender knowledge or insight, may have been weakened through the very practice of *City of Signs*.

So, it is not the proposition that is under question—indeed it is perhaps the closest in terms of aims and context to this research—rather, it is the ability of the process undertaken and the work produced, through *City of Signs*, to redefine the role of both graphic design and the graphic designer, which is in question.

2.6 Conclusion

The work evaluated here offers a range of useful insights with regard to methodology, design process and design practice, and shows examples of work that unite both theory and practice. Key to the majority of the successful visual executions discussed is an ability to get beyond the ‘surface’ of the text in such a way as to create a space of interpretation and interaction for the reader through the execution of design interventions developed through an engagement with content. The work that fails to do this to its full potential—*Rodinsky’s Whitechapel* and *The New Cranbrook Design Discourse*—serve as a reminder that the aim of this research is to get beyond a generic engagement with place and that in order to communicate this engagement, the design must venture beyond superficial engagement with style and systems.

The successful examples of work achieve this in a variety of ways. Ridout engages one physically through the work, taking the reader on a journey, constructing a space of experience. The work also engages an element of chance, both through Ridout’s research methodology and in the connections that the reader may or may not make between the items chosen for inclusion. In this work, and the Fluxkits, it is the participant’s involvement and experience that is crucial.

Pamminger and Bell reveal the possibilities of graphic design and typography to intervene within the space of the page or book, and create new spaces of interpretation for the reader. The visual simplicity of Bell’s work belies its potential impact—expressive typography need not engage in visual pyrotechnics, but can speak volumes through an engagement with language and content. Pamminger’s work goes beyond the surface of the page in terms of both his engagement with content and his use of the underlying grid, repositioning it as a visibly active component in the

construction of meaning. Similarly, the 'prepared pages' of *Performance Research* and the book design of Bruce Mau, focus on the potential of graphic and typographic interventions to create 'openings' for the reader to engage with, and become a co-creator of, the content and meaning.

This work calls into question Ingold's (2007: 24) assertion that the page 'has lost its voice' through the advent of the printing process, severing the connection between the 'prophet's mouth' and the 'scribe's inky traces' (Ingold 2007: 13). The proactive utilisation of graphic design and typography, in collaboration with the author and/or text, reconnects the graphic designer with the surface of the page, and allays both Mermoz and Ingold's concerns of the page as landscape or screen that one passively gazes at from afar. These approaches also highlight the potential of graphic design, executed within the context of print, to contribute to debates about representation within cultural geography and to offer geographers examples of two-dimensional, paper-based practice that is performative in nature.

In the work of Nold and walk walk walk it is the participatory elements that reflect aspects of the methodology used within this research. It is clear that by engaging participants, the artists are able to record insights and narratives that they themselves may not have experienced. Through the participatory and performative nature of the engagement they are also able to 'reposition' place so that the participants see it anew. This approach, and that of much of the work above, enables the work to be viewed as processual in nature (Kitchin & Dodge 2007), moving from representation to interpretation through the engagement of the participant.

The notions of experience, interpretation, interactivity and performativity are clearly important within the practice-led aspect of this research. The intention is to develop work that gives a greater sense of place, therefore materials need to move beyond pure information; they need to offer some kind of interaction and experience for the reader, so as to engage their imagination and 'transport' them to the place in question. The experience needs to 'be' that of Hackney, rather than be 'about' Hackney. Thus the work needs to create primary experiences rather than 'after words'. It is clear from the many examples here that graphic design has the potential to engage in this way.

This research attempts to engage graphic design in an interdisciplinary, geo/graphic context, with regard to the representation of place. The retrieval of Mermoz's hypotheses regarding both typography and the *City of Signs*, offers a starting point. However, if it is to be successful this research must address the problematic divide between theory and practice and deliver a sustained response to place that probes beneath the 'surface', both ethnographically and typographically.

3

**A methodological framework for
the development of a geo/graphic
design process**

The development of the geo/graphic design process is interdisciplinary in nature and therefore the methodology developed draws on a range of approaches from both the social sciences and graphic design. The qualitative, naturalistic and reflective methodology engages with the geo/graphic design process as a whole—from ways of interacting with, and developing an understanding of, place, through to the development of ideas for, and the design of, print based re/presentations of place that offer the reader an engaging, interactive experience. Such a multi-method approach has been described as that of the ‘bricoleur’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: 4), the researcher who uses a set of interpretive practices ‘tailored to the individual project’ and ‘responsive, driven by the requirements of practice and the creative dynamic of the art/design work’ (Gray & Malins 2004: 72). The methods utilised within this research were; walking; photography; ethnographic observation and field notes; cultural probes; ‘noticing, collecting and thinking’ (Seidel 1998); and, participatory action research within the context of the graphic design practice.

3.1 Opening up the research space between disciplines

The bricoleur’s approach is pluralist and characteristic of an artistic methodology, but is no less rigorous than the approach taken in a quantitative study. The specific research methods are not chosen haphazardly, but are taken from interlinked and related approaches in order to form ‘a developmental set, which is coherent’ (Gray & Malins 2004: 72–4). This approach facilitates the construction of a ‘bricolage’...

a complex ... reflexive, collage or montage—a set of fluid, interconnected images and representations (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: 6).

A pieced together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 4)

For an interdisciplinary study such as this bricolage is appropriate as it ‘recognises the dialectical nature’ of such an undertaking, and ‘promotes a synergistic interaction’ (Kincheloe 2001: 679). For Cocker (2008: 1) ‘inter’ has a ‘special status’, one that ‘signals a position of inbetweenness—of both being within and without—of maybe playing the game but with different rules’. Here, the construction of a bricolage through the deployment of various methods from the social sciences—in particular ethnography and

cultural geography—and graphic design, has enabled me to develop a ‘new methodological synthesis’ (Kincheloe 2001: 685). In research such as this it is the ‘liminal zones where disciplines collide’ that new knowledge approaches, like the geo/graphic design process, are likely to be found (Kincheloe 2001: 689, see also Rendell 2006: 11). Situating oneself in such a space has been described as being in a position of ‘without’, of undertaking a project that ‘isn’t organised around an... existent methodology’ (Phelan & Rogoff 2001: 34). Phelan & Rogoff suggest that this should not be seen as ‘a form of lack’ or ‘turning your back on, or denying what you had at your disposal previously’. Rather, it assumes that one had a model to begin with that is no longer interesting or useful, so one is ‘actively doing without the certitudes’ without, as yet, ‘having produced a hard-and-fast subject or methodology to replace them’ (2001: 34).

Such an interdisciplinary space has also been described by Pearson & Shanks (2001) as creating a ‘blurred genre’, where two disciplines (in their case theatre and archaeology) are no longer functioning as discrete entities. Such a blurred genre necessitates

...different *ways of telling* and different types of recording and inscription, which can incorporate different orders of narrative. It suggests mutual experiments with modes of documentation which can integrate text and image... (Pearson & Shanks 2001: 131).

The term they use for such ways of telling is ‘incorporations’. An incorporation is a site report that acknowledges

juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and contemporary, the political and the poetic, the factual and fictional, discursive and the sensual. These are proactive documents: their parts do not necessarily cohere. They will require work but they leave space for the imagination of the reader (Pearson & Shanks 2001: 159).

The bricolage in this particular instance was constructed using the following research methods. Broadly speaking, an ethnographic approach is used to develop an understanding of the London borough of Hackney. Initially, Hackney was explored on foot, and images of interest recorded through photography. Alongside this, cultural probes (Gaver, Dunne & Pacenti 1999) were used to generate further content about Hackney from

individual participants. Both these explorations and the cultural probe returns generated insights and areas of particular interest that were then researched and analysed further with a view to developing the design test projects. The nature of the research design as a reflexive, naturalistic inquiry is such that it enables the potential to respond to emerging issues during the ethnographic research. During the development of the design test projects the analysis of much of this content was conducted using Seidel's (1998) method of 'noticing, collecting, and thinking'. The process of participatory action research then forms the basis of the approach to the execution of the design test projects. Central to the ethnographic methods, to Seidel's approach, and to participatory action research, are Schön's concept of the reflective practitioner, and the process of reflection. It is the reflection that enables the continual refocusing and refinement of the research project as a whole. It also enables the progress of the design practice in relation to the ongoing development and testing of the geo/graphic design process, and vice versa.

3.2 Ethnographic methods of experiencing and understanding place

The use of ethnographic methods will enable a direct connection between the researcher, place, and its visual representation; an immediate encounter with 'real world messiness' (Crang & Cook 2007: 14). This aligns with Perkins suggestion that attempts to visually represent space should not be lab based, but should engage with the 'real' world, and Pink's (2008: 175) theorizing of ethnography as a 'place-making process'. In ethnography, the engagement with the group being studied is traditionally described as fieldwork. However, as Pink (2009: 9) has stated, classic methods such as participant observation are often not viable in contemporary contexts, and in this research that is the case—the areas I was 'observing' were not bounded in any way, and the 'participants' were not part of a finite group. Also, there is no 'blueprint for how to do fieldwork' (Pink 2007: 5), so my approaches to the process of participant observation and the particular sites for observation were therefore developed through my ongoing dialogue with place, and the primary method for this was walking.

Walking place: A sensory ethnography

It has been suggested that walking is not only 'fundamental to the everyday practice of social life', but also 'to much anthropological fieldwork' (Lee & Ingold 2006: 67) and it is perhaps because of this that in recent years

walking has

become increasingly central as a means of both creating new and embodied ways of knowing and producing scholarly narrative (Pink, Hubbard, O'Neill & Radley 2010: 1).

As discussed in chapter one, walking as a tactic for exploring place and everyday life has been used in a range of disciplines over several decades. However, it is only more recently that it has been positioned as 'a *methodological* concern within the context of discussions of ethnographic practice' and this could be put down to the interest in mobility, movement, flow, and place within a range of academic disciplines (Pink et al 2010: 3). There is also a recognition that walking offers an embodied engagement with the environment (Lee & Ingold 2006: 68–69, Pink et al 2010: 3), and one that rather than emphasising the researcher's position of being an outsider entering *into* the field, positions them as 'walking *with*—where 'with' implies not a face-to-face confrontation, but heading the same way, sharing the same vistas...' (Lee & Ingold 2006: 67). One enters the 'flow' of a place and becomes a part of it.

The pace of walking also offers the opportunity and the time for reflection (Edensor 2010: 72, Lee & Ingold 2006: 69). Solnit describes it as

the intentional act closest to the unwilled rhythms of the body, to breathing and the beating of the heart. It strikes a delicate balance between working and idling, being and doing. It is a bodily labour that produces nothing but thoughts, experiences, arrivals (Solnit 2001: 5).

She goes on to suggest that it is the rhythm of walking that 'generates a rhythm of thinking' (Solnit 2001: 5) and indeed, Nietzsche observed that 'all truly great thoughts are conceived while walking' (Burkeman 2010: 1). The impact of exploring place on foot in this research is discussed further in *Walking place*, in chapter six, section one.

Walking also engages us beyond the cerebral, and offers a multi-sensory experience of place. The development of a 'sensory ethnography' takes this 'multisensoriality of experience perception, knowing and practice' as its starting point (Pink 2009: 1). This type of approach positions ethnography as 'a reflexive and experiential process' that 'is open to multiple ways of knowing and to the exploration of and reflection on new routes to

knowledge' (Pink 2009: 8). In *Experiencing place*, in chapter six, section two, multi-sensorial aspects of the experience of place are discussed further in relation to the research method of walking used to explore Hackney. In *The place of materials of production*, in chapter eight, section three, they are discussed in relation to design interventions that can be made in order to engage the reader's senses in terms of touch and smell.

Photographing place: A visual ethnography

As with the centrality of walking to fieldwork, a camera has also been a key part of an ethnographer's 'tool kit' (Pink 2007: 65). Until the late 1980s the literature relating to photography and film within ethnography was that of the 'how-to' manual and positioned such methods as unmediated and capable of offering an objective, realist image of everyday life and place. However, with the advent of postmodern thinking such approaches to knowledge were challenged and replaced by 'ideas of ethnography as fiction' that emphasised the centrality subjectivity and the position of the researcher within the work. This led to the recognition that an image was no more or less subjective than a written text (Pink 2007: 1) and therefore visual ethnographers such as Pink began to explore the creation and use of imagery as an ethnographic method in its own right.

Pink goes on to suggest that there are 'no fixed criteria that determine which photographs are ethnographic', that every photograph can hold different significance for, and be interpreted differently by, different people at different times (Pink 2007: 67). To that end, in the course of this research, I used the photography as a reflexive and reflective tool to record images that were of interest to me during my exploration of Hackney on foot, and this is discussed further in section one, *Documenting place*, in chapter seven. So, rather than attempt to create a comprehensive photographic survey that reflects the 'truth' about Hackney, these images are best seen as 'representations of aspects of culture' (Pink 2007: 75).

Retaining perspective

Traditional participant observation is focused on gaining an understanding of the space of the research via the retention of an outsider's perspective (Kurz 2008), and whilst walking enables one to 'walk *with*' rather than simply 'walk *into*', the researcher still needs to maintain some kind of distance. Clifford (1988: 34) describes this process as a 'continuous tacking

between the “inside” and “outside” of events’. Retaining this perspective is vital, and Hammersley & Atkinson (2007: 90) suggest that ‘the comfortable sense of “being at home” is a danger signal’ and that there must always be ‘some social and intellectual distance’ to enable the analytic work. So, it is about being in place, and ‘experiencing the other’ via one’s own sensory perception. The notion of ‘the other’ perhaps conjures up exotic locations, however, Highmore (2002: 87) suggests that practicing ethnography ‘at home’ enables its most ‘critical possibilities’ to be revealed and the ordinariness of the everyday can be challenged and questioned as if it ‘were part of a totally unfamiliar culture’.

Traditionally, ethnographers take field notes during participant observation, and further notes are usually written after leaving the setting. Crang & Cook (2007: 51) cite Cloke et al (2004: 201–4) as suggesting prospective ethnographers could productively combine six different layers of description:

- a) Locating an ethnographic setting.
- b) Describing the physical space of that setting.
- c) Describing others’ interaction within that setting.
- d) Describing your participation in interactions in that setting.
- e) Reflecting on the research process.
- f) Self-reflections.

They go onto to expand on each of Cloke et al’s headings in much greater detail and offer some suggested questions that the researcher might try to answer within their field notes. For example, in relation to the physical space of the setting they suggest answering the following:

What size and shape did the setting have?
What were its main physical characteristics?
How would you describe them so readers could picture them?
Could you find drawings, do some sketching or take photographs?
Did this physical setting change?
If so, how? (Crang & Cook 2007: 51)

Whilst these headings and the specific questions offer a very clear framework to take into the field, as I noted earlier, often contemporary settings are not ‘bounded’ in such a way as to make this approach feasible. So an alternative recording strategy of ‘the salience hierarchy’ (Wolfinger 2002: 89) could be adopted. Here the ethnographer simply starts by

describing what strikes them as the most interesting observation within the setting. Whichever strategy one uses, the notes will be inevitably be informed by the researcher's tacit knowledge, beliefs and experience (Wolfinger 2002: 93), therefore one must subject immediate assumptions to a process of reflection and further observation. Reflection on the use of ethnographic methods of documenting place during this research can be found in chapter seven.

Beyond the researcher's own encounters with people and place, good ethnographic research should also concern itself with other representations of their site of study, for example, fictional and documentary literature, and images and art forms (Pink 2009: 47) as these are embedded in both the representation of place, but also the making of place. Armin & Thrift (2002: 14) take a similar position in relation to the reflexive practice of walking as a tactic for engaging in, and coming to know the city. They suggest that a 'poetic of knowing is not sufficient', and that other, more traditional elements, such as historical guides and photographs can bring a broader contextual awareness to an attempt to understand and represent the city. *Reading place*, in chapter six, section six, highlights the impact of developing wider tactics for the understanding and representation of place in relation to the design test projects that were developed using content generated through traditional documentary research.

Cultural probes

In discussing the recording of everyday life, Highmore (2002: 171) suggests a 'tool kit' is needed that enables the 'different registers of a polyphonic everyday' to be heard, and this could perhaps be likened to a description of cultural probes. Originally developed as 'part of a strategy of pursuing experimental design in a responsive way' (Gaver, Dunne & Pacenti 1999: 22), the first probe packs included a set of postcards, maps, a disposable camera, a photo album and media diary, and the focus of the research was to enable the development of new interactive technologies that would increase the presence of the elderly in their local communities. Although the probes were initially developed within a specific piece of interactive design research, they have since been used widely in a number of disciplines, including ethnographic research (for example, Robertson 2008). The probes are designed to be fun to use, to break down the barrier between researcher and participant, and to provide inspirational responses

rather than information. They are primarily designed to understand ‘people in situ, uniquely, not abstractly en masse’ (Hemmings, Crabtree & Rodden 2003: 50). The specific contents of the pack are not set in stone, but are designated for each individual research project and therefore are able to relate to the specifics of the study and/or participants involved. The method has been developed from the perspective and traditions of the artist/designer, rather than the scientist, and has its roots in the approach and ideas of the Surrealists and Situationists (Gaver et al 1999, Gaver, Boucher, Pennington & Walker 2004). The designers themselves state that

Scientific theories may be one source of inspiration for us, but so are more informal analyses, chance observations, the popular press, and other such “unscientific” sources (Gaver et al 1999: 24).

The probe returns are therefore used in an ‘openly subjective’ way, stimulating the designers’ imagination, rather than defining a particular issue that ‘needs addressing’ (Gaver et al 1999: 25). Many of the disciplines that have adopted cultural probes as a method have taken this inspirational and openly subjective approach to be a failing, and have attempted to rationalize the probes, asking specific questions and analysing results (Gaver et al 2004). This entirely misses the point of the probes—their values are ‘uncertainty, play, exploration, and subjective interpretation’ (Gaver et al 2004: 53)—they, and the researchers who developed them, embrace subjectivity rather than seek to minimize it. However, I doubt the returns were, as Gaver et al state (2004: 53), not analysed at all. I would suggest that they were analysed as part of the design process, albeit in a way that does not perhaps have the clearly articulated methodological structures of more traditional social science analysis, but an analysis all the same. As Rand (1970: 12) states in relation to the designer and the generation of ideas:

In order, therefore, to achieve an affective solution to his problem, the designer must necessarily go through some sort of mental process. Consciously or not, he analyses, interprets, formulates.

If there were no evaluation or analysis of the materials generated by the probes, I fail to see how the designers could use them as inspiration and generate ideas from them. Gaver et al (2004: 56) state that the relationship between the probes and the design process is complex. Boehner, Vertesi, Sengers & Dourish (2007: 5) state that much of the literature about

the broader use of probes shows a lack of detail when discussing how designers moved from probe to design. They suggest that this may either be because explanations are deemed to be unnecessary as the probes have become 'reproducible' as a method, or that the process is about some kind of intuition that is 'difficult to pin down'. The use of the word reproducible is interesting as it would seem that much of the original thinking behind the probes was to keep responses open, it is perhaps more likely that the second explanation is closer to the mark. However, the 'inspirational' nature of the probes is perhaps problematically paradoxical when it comes to clearly articulating a specific probe-to-design process. To describe this process could be in danger of negating it or closing down possibilities, yet not to describe it leaves those who are not from a design background unclear as to how to proceed with the results. As a designer, the possibility of the articulation of this transition from probe to design practice is clearly an area for analysis and evaluation, and this will be discussed further in *The place of 'noticing, collecting and thinking'* in section two, chapter seven.

Probe returns encourage the construction of narratives about the participants, they make the familiar strange and the strange familiar, but they don't dictate what should then be made through the design process (Gaver et al 2004). With their philosophical approach rooted in the disciplines of art and design, and their ability to provide 'fragmented illustrations and narratives' (Jääsko & Mattelmäki 2003: 4–5) the probes are an appropriate method for this research. The fragmented nature of the narrative has parallels with Massey's definition of place, but also offers the designer an opportunity to develop a fuller narrative from the responses. As Gaver et al (2004: 55) state:

Rather than producing lists of facts written about our volunteers, the probes encourage us to tell stories about them, much as we tell stories about the people we know in daily life.

Auto-photography

The inclusion of a camera within the probe packs, and the fact that the participants themselves will take the photographs, has some parallels with auto-photography—a research method that is growing in popularity in the social sciences (Johnsen, May & Cloke 2008). The popularity of auto-photography denotes:

A move away from the 'perfect' images that are composed and recorded by researchers, toward approaches that place 'the researched' behind the camera. Such a move goes some way at least in challenging the unequal power relations between researcher and 'researched' (Johnsen et al 2008: 195).

Auto-photography also offers an opportunity to gain a 'view of spaces and everyday practices beyond the limits of participant observation' (Ellis 2003: 5).

To date, auto-photography has been undertaken in a variety of ways. Sometimes participants are given explicit instructions regarding the type of photographs they are to take; at others the instructions are left intentionally more vague. In some studies participants produce nothing but the photographs; in others they are asked for captions or to take part in an interview (Johnsen et al 2008: 196). Auto-photographic approaches also differ in their modes of analysis and interpretation. Sometimes this is limited to content analysis (usually the quantitative analysis of who has photographed what) and does not take into account 'the meanings invested in spaces by photographers' (Crang & Cook 2007: 112), other researchers place more emphasis on narratives and,

bring the intentionality of the author to the fore—enabling presentation of spaces that are important to them, and explicitly providing room for accounts of whether they consider them to be dangerous, mundane, 'homely', therapeutic (or whatever), without having content and meanings imposed by the researcher (Johnsen et al 2008: 196).

The design, distribution, and analysis of the cultural probes, and their returns, produced for this research is detailed in *Probing place*, section two, chapter seven.

Adapting research methods

The initial cultural probe studies did not include post-return interviews. This was presumably because if a participant were to explain an image or response, it would cease to function in an inspirational way—it would become 'normal', rather than a 'fragmented illustration' that the researcher would then have to flesh out through their own imagination and inspiration. However, Robertson (2008: 4–5) argues that, although contentious, it can be profitable to adapt the probes and seek a balance

between inspiration and information by also utilizing traditional methods such as interviews. Boehner et al (2007: 8) also state that ‘there is nothing wrong with adapting probes’, but what is problematic is adaptation without reflection—the researcher needs to think through why and how the new variants make sense, with an awareness of implications for the research (Denzin & Lincoln 1994: 3). Patton (2002: 52) suggests that interviews further enable the development of a non-judgemental, empathetic understanding, thus giving an empirical basis for research from which it is possible to portray the perspectives of others.

In this instance some follow up interviews were undertaken as part of the research, and the context of these is discussed in *Participating in place*, section four, chapter six. However, these were taken after the probes had provided their moment of ‘inspiration’ and the focus of the interviews was then to develop further content for the design test project inspired by the returns. Such interviews should not be confused with an attempt to portray ‘reality’ or authenticity’, however, this direct contact with participants via the cultural probe packs and interviews does enable a broader understanding of aspects of everyday life within Hackney and clearly offers a different perspective to that of the researcher.

3.3 Designing ethnographies

According to Walcott (in Creswell 1997: 60) an ethnographic study is comprised of three different procedures: a detailed description of the group studied; a theme or perspective based analysis of the group; and an interpretation of the group that presents theories about their social interactions and everyday lives. These three aspects form a

a holistic cultural portrait of the social group that incorporates both views of the actors in the group (emic) and the researcher’s interpretation of views about human social life in a social science perspective (etic) (Creswell 1997: 60).

Creswell describes this cultural portrait as an overview of the entire cultural scene, generated by drawing together all the diverse elements learned about the group studied, and showing this in all its complexity (Creswell 1997: 61). The description of this portrait has parallels with the focus of this study. Although I am not engaged in attempting to produce detailed description, analysis and theory about specific aspects of everyday

life within Hackney, my intent is to re/present place and everyday life in a multitude of forms through the visual work—this could be seen as a cultural portrait. To this end, I have engaged a range of participants from Hackney and used the methods of description, analysis and interpretation within the development and execution of the design test projects. However, the description, analysis and interpretation may not have the depth that a trained ethnographer's would. I am adapting, using and interpreting these methods from my perspective as a graphic designer, within the context of the overall pluralist methodological approach. Although this is not to suggest I am producing as 'ethnography-lite', and in using such methods I would hope to avoid the criticisms of 'sociological condescension' that Foster (1995: 306) levels at many artists working with ethnographic methods. However, the ultimate purpose of this research is not to write an ethnography, or to develop a theory about a particular community, but to develop and test a geo/graphic design process. Therefore, in relation to the ethnographic research methods, the analytical and evaluative focus is on the process by which the ethnographic materials are first generated and whether this provides suitable material with which to develop a visual re/presentation, or cultural portrait of place through the design test projects. This is discussed further in chapters six and seven.

Content analysis

The materials generated by the previously discussed ethnographic research methods were analysed using Seidel's (1998) qualitative data analysis process of 'noticing, collecting, and thinking'. This method was chosen as it reflects and complements the design process and the process of action research, in that it is not linear but 'iterative, progressive, recursive and holographic' (Seidel 1998: np). Each of these characteristics is present in the design process—it is a cycle or spiral like form that enables the design practice to progress through many iterations, it offers the recursive flexibility to revisit previous ideas in the light of new discoveries, and each step of the process cannot be taken in isolation. The fact that Seidel describes the process as recursive (one part can call you back to a previous part) and holographic (each step in the process contains the entire process) gives a sense that it enables a holistic practice, one that will unite both theory and practice.

Seidel's method works in the following way. Noticing works on two levels; firstly, it relates to the actual fieldwork—producing a record of the things

one has noticed; secondly, it relates to the coding of data. These codes are, in simplistic terms, a way of highlighting elements of interest, or patterns within the content. They can then function as ‘tools to think with’ (Coffey & Atkinson 1996: 32) or ‘heuristic devices’ that enable the researcher to think about the data in new and different ways (Seidel & Kelle 1995: 54). Collecting refers to the sorting of the information that has been recorded and coded. The final step in the process—thinking—is the examination of the materials. This process, if looked at from a design perspective, could be seen as a form of editing. The goals are making sense out of the collection, identifying patterns and relationships in the materials and to make discoveries about the subject of your research (Seidel 1998: np). Seidel uses the analogy of sorting pieces of a jigsaw puzzle into relevant sections such as edges, sky and grass to describe the process. However, the picture of the research puzzle is not present at the start, but is the end goal, and Seidel cautions against getting lost in the pieces, or the codes, and losing sight of how all the pieces fit together in the bigger picture (Seidel 1998: np).

Jorgensen defines qualitative analysis as:

Analysis is a breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts or elements or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful fashion (Jorgensen in Seidel 1998: np).

It is clear to see how Seidel’s model fits with this definition, but there are also parallels here with design, and in particular information design. An information designer uses typography and graphic design to transform complex material by ordering, structuring and articulating information in a way that it is easy to understand visually. Complex information systems, such as very large websites, are often developed by an information architect who creates the order, taxonomies and navigation interfaces. Walker & Barratt (2007) define this role as ‘part information designer, part information scientist, and part information systems professional’. Although the practice led elements of this research may not ultimately be what one might identify as traditional information design—charts, diagrams, tables, guides, instructions, directories and maps (Tufte 1990)—aspects of analysis

and the design process align closely with those methods employed by the information designer.

The process of analysis undertaken throughout this research is discussed in chapter seven, with particular reference to the content generated for the design test projects, and the probe returns. Although the probes are designed to 'inspire' and to resist formal analysis, the simplicity of Seidel's mode, and its parallels with the design process, offer the opportunity to both test whether probes really do resist analysis, and to knowingly reinterpret the method in a productive way. Analysis is also discussed in relation to prototyping within graphic design practice, in chapter eight.

Ethnographic narratives

Neither Seidel's (1998) method, nor any other method of analysis, will enable researchers to find the 'truth'. Ethnographic research produces intersubjective, 'inherently partial' truths (Clifford & Marcus 1986: 7, Duncan & Ley 1993: 4), as different people make sense of events that affect them in different ways and therefore develop their own 'truth'. These stories are, then, the means through which the world is 'constructed, understood and acted out', rather than a mirror view of events (Crang & Cook 2007: 14).

There are three main ethnographic writing styles: code writing, auto-ethnographic writing and montage writing. The first follows on from the coding process; the second attempts to use the text to evoke a more personal relationship between the researcher, participants and readers; and the third juxtaposes and combines different elements of 'data' to illustrate the fact that various fragmentary parts of the ethnographic material do not necessarily fit together seamlessly to create a 'whole' (Crang & Cook 2007: 151). The third style aligns with Massey's view of place and links to Barthes' notions of writerly texts and lexias. This polyvocal text is not simply a way of evading 'authorial responsibility' it is 'a means of perspectival reality' (Tyler 1986: 125). It also provides, not only an interesting approach for written texts, but also for design practice and visual re/presentation. Soja (1989: 1–2) subscribes to this move away from traditional linear narratives and encourages breaking out 'from the temporal prison house of language'. However, he uses Borges' tale of *The Aleph* (1999: 274), to show the potential impossibility of this task. *The Aleph* is a place where all places on earth can be seen at once, simultaneously, but because of this simultaneity, it cannot be translated into text because of the sequential

nature of language. Designing with montage writing encounters a similar problem of simultaneity, however the design test projects in this research are not bound by the traditions and constraints of academic writing. This enables experimentation not only with text and image, but also with physical aspects of format and layout, which could be said to enable a 'simultaneous' reading of images and/or texts. Reflection on this method, in relation to the development and execution of the design test projects, is contained in chapters seven and eight.

Such experimental ethnographic writing does have its critics, who judge its complexities as existing for their own sake and obscuring the real issues of the text (Crang & Cook 2007: 154). However, in other fields such as art, film and music, montage has been an accepted form of practice since the 1920s, with artists—particularly the Surrealists—using the technique of montage to bring disparate items and images together 'in disruptive and surprising' ways with the intention of 'defamiliarising the everyday' and 'making the ordinary strange' (Highmore 2002: 46). In this context one could also see the probe returns as a type of montage as they produce fragmentary narratives that enable the designers to look at the lives of participants in a new way.

Marcus suggests that ethnographers could develop 'a sort of cinematic imagination geared to writing, and suggests that the writing is essentially a form of 'architecture' that can create 'spaces for imagination' (Marcus 1994: 45, cited in Crang & Cook 2007: 195–6). Rather than use a filmic metaphor, Pile (2002: 204) has suggested that film is the best media for capturing the multiple experiences and 'flow of life of the city' as it is able to cut between places, move through time in a non-linear fashion and pan out or zoom in. However, the idea of a sequence of time-spaces does not solely reside with film, but also with books (Carrion 2001, Mau 2000) and clearly affirms the opportunity to explore Marcus' ideas about cinematic imagination, and the writing/designing montage approach through structure, rhythm, pace and narrative within the temporal form of the book.

Since postmodernism and poststructuralism ethnographers have employed a variety of alternative textual formats, such as ethno-drama and poetry, in order to construct 'more open and "messy" texts' (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 204). Messy texts are those that explore multiple, non-linear narratives and seek to 'portray the contradiction and truth of human experience' (Guba & Lincoln 2005: 211). However, because of the prejudice

toward the written word within social sciences (Dwyer & Davies 2010: 92, Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 148), they have not experimented with the possibilities of the visual in any sustained way. Scheider & Wright (2006: 4) go as far to suggest that the discipline of anthropology suffers from 'iconophobia', suggesting that there is potential for 'productive dialogue' and 'fertile collaboration' between contemporary anthropology and art that could 'encourage border crossings' and enable the development of new 'strategies of practice' (2006: 1). Pink (2009: 137) has also suggested that 'no conventions for visual-textual sensory evocation in ethnographic texts' have been established, and that we need to

understand the potential of text that combines still images and written words to represent/describe and comment on the *multisensory experience of walking* and the affective dimensions of this (Pink et al 2010: 5).

These statements have parallels with the perceived lack of visual practice in geography, with Perkins (2006: np) suggesting that geographers prefer to deconstruct images via the medium of text, and it is a similar 'border crossing' that this research seeks to facilitate.

Rhetoric

An ethnographic approach also demands an understanding of the role of the researcher's 'voice' and presence within the research, analysis, and design. Poststructuralist and postmodern thinking has led to the realisation that

language used by ethnographers in their writing is not a transparent medium allowing us to see reality through it, but rather a construction that draws on many... rhetorical strategies (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 12).

Pink (2008: 179) describes ethnographers as being 'entangled in place making processes'. Total objectivity is therefore impossible as the researcher is always present in the work as an interpreter. Patton (2002: 41) suggests that the researcher's goal is a balance between understanding and depicting the complex nature of the world authentically and at the same time ensuring that one remains 'self-analytical, politically aware, and reflexive in consciousness' (see also Bryman 2004: 500, Davies 1999: 15 and Holliday 2004: 55). I would suggest that this also translates to a designer's

role. Within the geo/graphic design process, the researcher takes both an authorial and editorial role and therefore has to exercise judgement and reflexivity throughout two different types of interpretation—that of the written and visual content gathered and constructed, followed by the visual interpretation through the design process and practice. Referring to Calvino's Professor Uzzi-Tuzzi and his realisation that 'every interpretation is the exercise of power, and an act of violence or caprice on the text' (Calvino 1981 in Bonsiepe 1999: 66), Bonsiepe notes that this is the same dilemma a graphic designer faces each time a text is interpreted visually in the form of a layout. Rittel (1987: 6) puts it somewhat more bluntly, but also sees it as unproblematic.

There is no neutral, objective design. *Design is subjective*. Of course. Why shouldn't it be?

The place of the researcher is explored further in section three, chapter six, in relation to a design-led approach, and to the impact of an awareness of this subjectivity in the development of one of the design test projects.

3.4 Design: A method of inquiry

This research is practice-led, and the practice is used as an 'explicit and intentional' research method that is able to 'embody research concepts' (Gray & Malins 2004: 104) and enables the testing and further development of the geo/graphic design process. The design practice is adopted as a form of 'educative enquiry' and has similarities with participatory action research (Pedgley & Wormauld 2007: 79). In much participatory action research 'knowledge, analysis and action emerge between the co-researchers and participants' (Kindon, Pain & Kesby 2007: 29). Although in design research of this type, the designer acts as both observer and participant within the practice (Glanville 1999: 89) employing 'systematic self-reflection' (Kemmis & McTaggart 2005: 563). The term 'project-grounded research' has also been used to highlight the fact that in practice-led research such as this, the design is not the central purpose (Findelli in Jonas 2007: 192). Rather it is the theorisation of the geo/graphic design process through the development of the design practice that is the main focus. The development of the practice, and therefore the geo/graphic design process, will therefore be undertaken within a participatory action research approach.

In English usage, the term action research was coined by social psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1940s. He describes the process of action research ‘as proceeding in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of planning, acting, observing and evaluating the result of the action’ (McTaggart 1997: 27). The process ‘resists linearity’ and is recursive (McIntyre 2008: 6) and often more complicated than an image of a smoothly curved spiral suggests.

In the real world, the process may encompass jumps and starts, complete revisions, or being stuck (Berridge 2008: 5).

The key to moving the research on generally, and through such problematic stages, is reflection. Reflection is inherent in action research, so much so, that some writers have likened what Schön (1987, 1991) terms ‘reflective practice’ to action research (McIntosh 2010: 34), and the cyclical process of action research is ‘often referred to as an action-reflection cycle’ (McNiff & Whitehead 2006: 9). Reflection occurs both as the work is being undertaken (reflection-in-action), and afterwards (reflection-on-action). Reflection-in-action is essentially improvisational, with judgements exercised during the ongoing practice; reflection-on-action retrospectively exercises the skills of analysis and evaluation. Both these types of reflection bring to bear the previous experience and knowledge of the designer—what Schön terms, ‘knowing in action’—and enable this to be used in a critical way, rather than an unquestioned, intuitive one (Schön 1987: 28, see also Scrivener 2000 for an account of the use of reflection in practice-led doctoral research in art and design).

Often intuitive decisions taken in practice remain unarticulated, and this has led to a separation between thought and action, and research and practice (Gray & Malins 2004: 22, see also Yee 2007: 8–9). However, the process of participatory action research ‘is more about building a relationship between theory and practice’ (Kemmis & McTaggart 2005: 574). Schön (1991: 308) also suggests that reflection-in-action is what ‘recasts this relationship’ and addresses that divide. The main focus of this research is to develop a geo/graphic design process that will be communicated to an audience that, in part, may not have a design background, so this critical, reflective approach is crucial if these seemingly intuitive moves are to be understood. Friedman (2001: np) suggests that Schön’s concept has limitations in terms of its usefulness as a bridge between theory

and practice, stating that some practitioners now propose reflective practice as a substitute for research. It is not'. Gray & Malins, who have also received some criticism in this respect⁴, state that the advantage of the practice led approach is that it is a means of 'generating new data through real experiential activity' (2004: 105). However, they also suggest that this approach does have some disadvantages. Unless the practice is framed within a clear and transparent methodological approach it can be 'open to criticisms of indulgence and over-subjectivity (Gray & Malins 2004: 105). Friedman's (2001: np) concerns are perhaps based, in part, on this type of criticism. If one's reflection is solely informed by one's own practice, then this could be seen as subjective, but also perhaps in danger of leading to work that becomes repetitive—a product of a formulaic application of previously experienced strategies that leads to a series of circular journeys from each new problem to each new solution. Because the design and execution of participatory action research is specific to each research context, not only is there 'no fixed formula' for its undertaking, there is also no one 'overriding theoretical framework' that should be used. On the contrary, 'there is a malleability in how participatory action research processes are framed and carried out' (McIntyre 2008: 2–3). This malleability makes the process extremely transferable, but the onus on the researcher is to ensure rigour in the research. In this case, the reflective approach brings to bear not only my previous experience as a practitioner, but also the wider understanding of the broad, multi-method approach and the relevant theoretical and conceptual positions linked to both the geo/graphic research and practice.

This methodology not only offers the opportunity to pursue clear developments and directions in the visual work, it also offers the opportunity to capitalize on tangential thoughts and 'mistakes' through more exploratory work. Schön (1991: 141) states that 'reflection-in-action necessarily involves experiment', and Mau (1998: np) also urges fellow designers to

4 Love (2006) accuses Gray & Malins (2004) of applying 'fallacious reasoning and sophist rhetoric' in order to post-rationalise their argument that visual art practice is research. Whilst I agree with some of Love's points, I feel some of Gray & Malin's writing on how reflection can drive the process of practice led research is useful. However, I would like to point out that I do not subscribe to such a simplistic equating of design practice to research, rather I view the process of practice-led research in the same way that Rust, Mottram, & Till (2007: 11) define it: 'Research in which the professional and/or creative practices of art, design or architecture play an instrumental part in an inquiry.'

Love your experiments (as you would an ugly child)...Exploit the liberty in casting your work as beautiful experiments, iterations, attempts, trials, and errors. Take the long view and allow yourself the fun of failure every day.

This and many others of Mau's (1998) strategies explore the possibilities of leaving the well-trodden route and exploring hidden territories in order to find new answers. However, the use of Schön's reflective approach here is crucial, ensuring the practice ultimately progresses through these 'deviations' or 'failures', rather than lose its way. A 'failure' in research terms often provides more information as to why things may not have worked than a final 'successful' piece (Gray & Malins 2004: 60). In design, this process has been likened to that of a conversation or argument between the work and the designer—the designer takes a decision which in turn changes the direction of the work; this new 'situation' 'talks back'; the designer responds, and so on and so forth (Glanville 1999: 89, Rittel 1987: 2, Schön 1991: 78). Many of these conversations are generated through prototyping of ideas, and prototyping can be seen as 'an activity to concretise thoughts and make them visible' (Mattelmäki & Matthews 2009: 6). Prototypes, 'failures', and the 'conversations' about them, are therefore vital to developing a clear understanding of the research process, and in this case, developing the geo/graphic design process. Reflection is therefore a generative process, not simply one that is conducted 'in the rear view mirror'.

It... generates and conducts action in an exploratory and experimental manner, with actions themselves standing as practical hypotheses or speculations to be tested as their consequences emerge and unfold (Kemmis & McTaggart 2005: 580).

Reflective conversations are often initially held with oneself, or articulated privately within the pages of a sketchbook or journal. However, at some point, these are usually discussed, articulated and, in a sense, tested with others. In the case of this research this happened during regular supervision meetings; at several college research network presentations; during meetings of the informally convened 'Space and Place' group amongst research students at University of the Arts London; in conversation at the *Experimenting with Geography* workshop; and, through the posts on the blog set up specifically to chart the progress of the

research and practice. By making these private ‘conversations’ public one is essentially testing the thinking one has applied to a particular issue and the language used to describe it. McIntosh (2010: 47) suggests that it is this move ‘from private to public’ that can be enlightening; that the knowing moves from unconscious to conscious forms; and, that ‘it is through finding the right words that understanding occurs’. Examples of these reflective conversations are discussed in chapters seven and eight, in relation to the development of links between theory and practice and the progression of the design test projects.

Working within a participatory action research framework enables the analysis and evaluation of ongoing design test projects in relation to the development of the geo/graphic design process, and this is discussed in detail in chapter eight. As this approach is focused on reflection it can, in a sense, act as an overarching container and driver for the practice. Friedman (2001: np), continuing his critique of how the approach has been mistakenly thought of as ‘a substitute for research’ describes it as ‘unbounded’, and states that it does not in itself constitute theorising and research. I agree that it is not research in itself, but I feel it is this ‘unboundedness’ that is part of its usefulness. It enables other potentially useful theoretical approaches to be introduced into the conception and construction of, and reflection on, the practice without ‘contravening’ a particular theoretical framework.

3.5 Writing: A method of inquiry

Throughout the research much of the reflection and analysis was undertaken through writing, and this could be considered as a ‘method of inquiry’ itself, rather than just a ‘mode of telling’ (Richardson 2005: 923).

Writing is also a way of ‘knowing’—a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable (Richardson 2005: 923)

There seem clear parallels here with the idea of design as a method of inquiry, or ‘designerly ways of knowing’ (Cross 2007), and both Burdick (1995: np) and Bruinsma (2001: 1) have likened design to writing. In fact, if one were to substitute the word ‘writing’ in Richardson’s quote with the word ‘design’, the statement would not only make sense, but would sum

up well the approach of this practice-led research. Indeed, Richardson also talks about the process of writing in terms of ‘wet clay’ as a material that ‘can be shaped’ (2005: 936). Richardson is an ethnographer and one of her motivations for reframing the practice of writing as ‘creative analytical processes’ (CAP) is her sense that much qualitative research, although perhaps rooted in a topic that is extremely interesting, is merely scanned as it often ends up as a text that is not engaging for the reader. Here there are parallels to both Mermoz’s (1995, 1998, 2000, 2002 and Mau & Mermoz 2004) and Ingold’s (2007) discussions of typography, print, and the place of the page.

Perec (1997: 13) states that ‘this is how space begins, with signs traced on a blank page’, and Pearson & Shanks (2001: 132) also liken the process of walking through a landscape to the construction of a text.

It begins with a sheet of whiteness, at once both page and landscape, a field for action. As a page it awaits our mark. Its whiteness challenges us to begin... First nothing, then a few signs which orientate us, and those who follow us, a rudimentary map. So writing plots a journey.

The journey writing plots is inevitably a slow one, but this lack of speed—much like walking—is productive and forces us to...

perceive actively, to make connections, to articulate thoughts and feelings which would otherwise remain at a pre-reflective... level of consciousness (Tilley 2004: 223–4).

Writing and reflecting on place, section four, chapter seven, highlights the approach taken within this research to the ethnographic method of field notes, and reveals it as an example of writing being utilised as both a mode of telling and a mode of inquiry.

Criteria for evaluation

Much of Richardson’s (2000, 2005) approach is informed by the changes in ethnographic writing brought about by the types of postmodern and poststructuralist thinking that were referred to in section 3.2—for example, the sense that there is ‘no single way—much less one “right” way—of staging a text’ (Richardson 2005: 936). This sense that within postmodern terms there is no ‘fixed point’ that can be triangulated—the traditional

method of validation within the social sciences—leaves such experimental practices open to question, in some quarters, in terms of validity. However, Richardson suggests that a more appropriate term for the validation of such multi-faceted, postmodern texts is that of ‘crystallisation’. As an infinitely variable, multifaceted shape that both reflects and refracts; a crystal offers structure, but one that is perhaps more appropriate than the fixed, two dimensional triangle.

What we see depends on our angle of response... Crystallisation provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously we know there is always more to know (Richardson 2005: 934).

Richardson offers a range of criteria that one can use as ‘lenses’ to see a ‘social science art form’ and assist with the creation of ‘vital’ texts that are ‘attended to’ and that ‘make a difference’ (Richardson 2005: 923).

Substantive contribution

Does this piece contribute to our *understanding* of social life...?

Aesthetic merit

... Does this piece succeed aesthetically? ... Is the text artistically shaped, satisfying, complex, and not boring?

Reflexivity

... How did the author come to write this text? How was the information gathered? Are there ethical issues? How has the author’s subjectivity been both a producer and a product of this text? Is there adequate self-awareness and self-exposure for the reader to make judgements about the point of view?

Impact

Does this affect me? Emotionally? Intellectually? Does it generate new questions? Move me to write? Move me to try new research practices? Move me to action?

Expression of a reality

Does this text embody a fleshed out, embodied sense of lived experience? Does it seem ‘true’—a credible account of a cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the ‘real’ (Richardson 2000: 937).

Although Richardson does not have a background in design, her criteria seem to draw on key elements of propositions within all phases of this research—from the ‘data’ collection, to the analysis, idea generation and visual execution. Many criteria discussed in relation to graphic design tend to either focus on the specifics of form, or make broad references to clear communication. For example, Chen, Cai, Huang & Kuo (2003) suggest ten criteria for the assessment of a piece of graphic design: balance, contrast, repetition, gradation, symmetry, harmony, proportion, rhythm, simplicity and unity. Attention to the form of the work is clearly important, indeed Richardson herself refers to it, but it is not the sole concern of this research. Garland (1996: 52) offers a slightly broader range of criteria in relation to typography:

It should elucidate, be in harmony with, and give appropriate form to the text.

It should create a form eventually attractive to the reader, though it may also disturb, shock or disconcert.

It should be a properly effective use of the chosen character-generation system.

It should have due regard to the physical characteristics of the substrate—whether of book, leaflets, posters, packs or whatever.

It should have due regard to any stated cost constraints.

However, aside from Garland’s first statement neither of these two design related sets of criteria make reference to content, nor to its generation, and nor to the subjective position of the designer. This is almost certainly because the predominant form of graphic design is still that which resides in the commercial world where much, or all, of the content is provided, and, as Rittel (1987: 6) has noted, subjectivity is part of the given role of a graphic designer; one has to interpret and style texts and images in order to produce a piece of graphic design. Indeed, within this research *subjectivity* is used in a proactive way, in relation to a subject specific approach, creating design interventions that engage the audience through form and content.

Richardson and Garland’s criteria offer a starting point for the development of a set of methods and criteria for the geo/graphic design process. Extrapolated via a process of analysis and evaluation during the process of

the research and practice, these geo/graphic methods and criteria form the primary part of the conclusions of this research.

3.6 Conclusion

This methodological approach draws on elements from social science research and design research in order to construct an interdisciplinary framework that is not only rigorous, but also offers the potential to act in a reflexive, responsive way, and thus capitalise on emergent issues during each of the phases. The ability to exercise a reflective and reflexive approach throughout all stages of the research process is crucial—from the designing of the cultural probes themselves; undertaking participant observation within Hackney; analysing the probe returns; and, developing the design test projects. The articulation of this approach is vital, as it needs to deliver an understanding of how this framework has enabled the research and practice to develop.

This methodology forms the basis of the geo/graphic design process. Design test projects, developed through both the cultural probe returns and participant observation are used as a method of testing the appropriateness of the framework and developing a clear set of methods for further researchers to apply to their own work, as well as a set of criteria with which to judge its success. At this stage the research clearly becomes practice-led, and develops through the action-reflection cycle; the work undertaken on design test projects feeds back into the theoretical development of the geo/graphic design process, and this, in turn, informs the next phase of the design work. MacDonald (2008) describes this process as a ‘shuttling back and forth’ between the two positions of practice and writing, suggesting that this process is constitutive of a practice-led PhD.

This therefore enables a productive synthesis of both theory and practice, using both design and writing as a method of inquiry. Discussing her own practice-led doctoral research, Berridge (2007: 5) describes this process:

I explored ways in which my information could be manipulated to form visual and textual pieces. The process became circular and spiral: the reading and information affected the visual and textual work and the choice of content for the artist’s book, and this in turn affected the direction of further reading and information gathering, so a further dialectic was set up between theory and practice.

3.6 Conclusion

In the context of this research it thus enables a bridging of the apparent divide between methods of exploring and representing place, and enables an investigation into Mermoz's (1995, 1998, 2000, 2002 and Mau & Mermoz 2004) typographic theories and Ingold's (2007) assertion that the printed page is unable to offer the reader a performative experience.

4

Hackney: A visual and textual overview

Chosen for its diversity, complexity, and its contrasting juxtapositions, the London Borough of Hackney is used as the testing ground for this practice-led research. Evidence of these contradictory representations of place is visible throughout the borough; housing changes from gentrified Victorian terraces to condemned estates; industrial histories are revealed through interwoven canal, rail and road networks; open spaces include Victorian parks, nature reserves and industrial wastelands. Throughout these spaces the borough's richly diverse communities live and work, each bringing their own customs, language and culture.

Hackney has developed something of a national media presence during the past ten years, having been described as the 'nation's worst place to live' (*Channel 4*, 2006) and Upper Clapton labelled 'the murder mile' (*The Observer* 2001). More recently, Dalston has been hailed as the capital's coolest place to live (*The Guardian*, 2009). Each one of these sweeping statements oversimplifies a complex narrative and presents a potentially skewed understanding of place. Writers such as Iain Sinclair, particularly within the pages of *Hackney, That Rose-Red Empire* (2009), have attempted to offer a broader picture of the borough, one that accepts what some might see as 'failings' but celebrates these as part of the particular 'spirit' of the place.

4.1 Exploring Hackney through words and pictures

Traditionally, the discussion of the 'site' in research that explores a particular place or community offers a fixed description, listing specifics in terms of geographical position and size, along with detailed information about the population, the economy and other relevant social, cultural and political contexts. This type of description is inevitably problematic in relation to the issues surrounding representation that have been discussed in the previous chapters. Here, rather than offer a traditional description of Hackney, this chapter attempts to paint a broader, more open picture. It uses images and texts to take the reader on a journey through the borough, and, in keeping with the aims of the research, invites the reader to interpret much of what they see and read. The 'story' is told through many perspectives, as the photographs used are taken from many of the cultural probe returns* and from my own visual research within Hackney. The texts are also drawn from a variety of sources; memories and stories from the cultural probe returns*; texts describing Hackney; and, occasional statistics relating to the borough's population. The inclusion of statistics allows

the reader to make contrasts or comparisons with the more ‘peopled’ images of Hackney. Positioning them within the body of the rest of the texts and images allows them to be considered not only in response to the other elements, but as part of a whole, rather than being the definitive representation of Hackney as they might be in a more traditional fixed description. So, whilst the following pages of this chapter do not constitute an example of the geo/graphic process, in the sense that they have not been designed as a specific artefact, they are in keeping with the general approach of the research to the re/presentation of place.

*Photographs and texts provided by participants are credited with initials to preserve their anonymity.

Hackney is a place of self-generating mythologies—everybody has his own version of what this story is. The layering of this place is so amazing and exciting. You really can't stand around for very long before someone steps out of a building and wants to give you another part of the narrative, and so the story gradually accumulates.

Iain Sinclair (2009: np)

4.1 Exploring Hackney through words and pictures



Fig. 50: DK, 2009



Fig. 51: SG, 2009

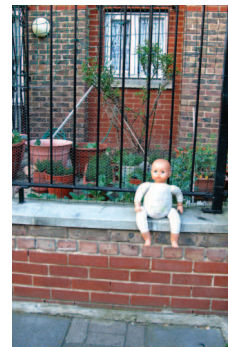


Fig. 52: KC, 2009



Fig. 53: Sign, Atlas Mews



Fig. 54: Condemned estate, Clapton Common



Fig. 55: HM, 2009

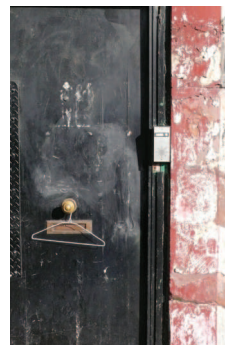


Fig. 56: Stamford Hill



Fig. 57: OR, 2009



Fig. 58: Shoreditch High Street

I've met many people from all over the world in Hackney. I don't have one memorable story to recall about my Hackney, rather I could relay many personal stories told to me by the people I've met in the borough. I became friends with a Hasidic Jew who used to go to a local pub very late at night for drinks and to observe and chat with people. I gained a lot of insight and understanding about the Jewish faith and lifestyle from our chats. I've had extensive chats with a young Chinese shop-owner in the area whose grandparents were ardent supporters of Chairman Mao. We learned a lot from each other about our opposing attitudes and values. I became good friends with a Turkish Cypriot mechanic who ran the garage on my road. Our connection extended beyond mere neighbourliness and allowed us to get to know each other as people with completely different backgrounds, religions, attitudes, and beliefs, and fostered acceptance and respect between us for our differences. I also became friends with a few other local workers: one a young Kurdish refugee from Iraq, whose family had been killed by Saddam Hussein's regime; another from Bangladesh who firmly believed that I am destined for hell because of my own lack of faith in 'God' but I did not let this interfere with our getting to know each other and contrasting our lifestyles. Examples of stories like these are possible when you live in Hackney and exist cheek by jowl with rich documenters from all parts of the world and are afforded the opportunity in these circumstances to hear their stories. Everyone is enriched.

EB, 2009

4.1 Exploring Hackney through words and pictures



Fig. 59: CF, 2009



Fig. 60: RM, 2009



Fig. 61: CL, 2009



Fig. 62: HF, 2009



Fig. 63: Bevenden Street



Fig. 64: Morning Lane



Fig. 65: CL, 2009



Fig. 66: Mare Street

Some years ago I was having renovation work done on my flat. The contractor had a young man helping him who was obsessed with Elvis. The lad had dyed his hair black and wore it in a huge quiff. He was a tall, gentle, slightly dim East End boy. At this time, my next door neighbour had a cleaning lady called Lily. Lily was by this point in her early 70s, was a tough wiry, canny Cockney whose husband, long dead, had been on the fringes of gangland life. My neighbour loved Lily who had been working for her for years although hearts would sink as yet another cherished ornament crashed to the floor. Although not an Elvis fan, Lily was very proud of her looks and always dressed smartly. She also dyed her hair a raven black. One morning when I came out of my flat, I discovered the lad and Lily swapping tips on the best hair dyes over the garden fence, completely serious in this sharing of a mutual experience. For me this is a Hackney story!

JF, 2009

I have lived in Hackney for 30 years on and off. My family home is here and I have decided to raise my own family here too. I love Hackney—always home.

I went to secondary school in Camden despite living East. I guess at that time there were no good secondary schools in Hackney. If any of my Camden friends came to visit me they'd hide their jewellery in their shoes—which I always found hilarious. I have never felt that the East End is a threatening place. I love its mix of characters and history.

KC, 2009



Fig. 67: CF, 2009



Fig. 68: RM, 2009



Fig. 69: JC, 2009



Fig. 70: JF, 2009



Fig. 71: RM, 2009



Fig. 72: HF, 2009

What does Your Hackney sound like?

CAR HORNS, BABIES, YIDDISH SINGING, ROAD WORKS, CONSTRUCTION, TINNY PHONE HIP-HOP, TURKISH, ENGLISH, UNDEFINABLE EASTERN-EUROPEAN DIALECTS, TV NOISE AND VERY LITTLE QUIET.

What does Your Hackney sound like?

MONDAY ||||| |||

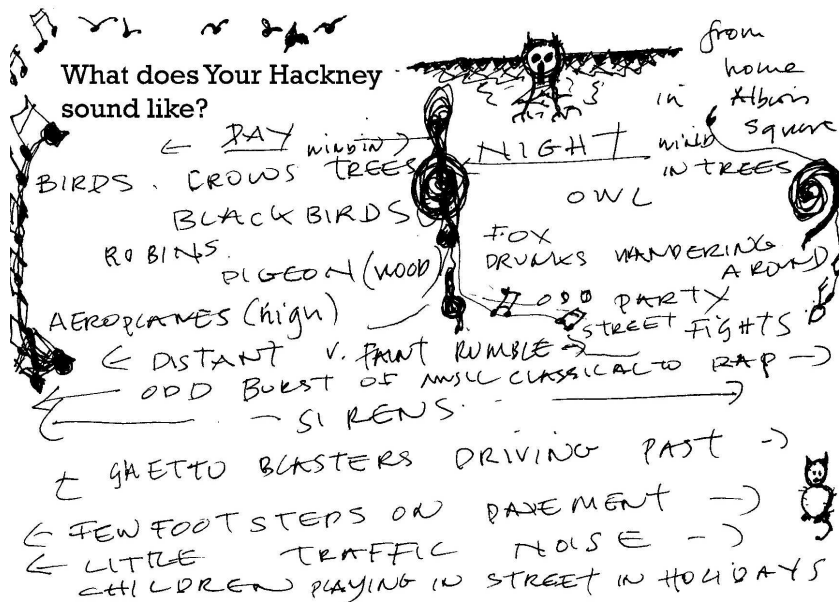
TUESDAY ||||| ||||| ||

WEDNESDAY ||||| |||||

THURSDAY ||||| ||||| ||||| |

FRIDAY

- ABOVE. - HOW MANY TIMES I HEARD POLICE SIRENS ON A WEEKDAY EVENING BETWEEN 8:00 PM - 12:00 AM.



4.1 Exploring Hackney through words and pictures



Fig. 73: Ashwin Street, 2008



Fig. 74: Ashwin Street, 2010



Fig. 75: AS, 2009



Fig. 76: Clapton Common



Fig. 77: Dunston Road



Fig. 78: Homerton Road



Fig. 79: Queensbridge Road



Fig. 80: Clapton Common



Fig. 81: KC, 2009



Fig. 82: Dalston Lane

WEDNESDAY, 14 JULY 2010

Speak up! They're not listening.

There are young people occupying the last surviving fragments of Dalston's Georgian houses. They know the sad history of our local heritage. They have something to say.



This year, after OPEN Dalston's long campaign, the Council finally bought the Dalston Lane houses back from the slum landlord which it sold them to at auction in 2002. But will the Council now carry on listening and responding to the local community?

The Council has started possession proceedings to evict the occupiers. The occupiers have offered the Council unrestricted access to carry out surveys and prepare refurbishment plans. But the Council has so far refused to let them stay until it's plans to restore the houses are ready to be implemented.

The occupiers are keeping the houses wind and watertight. They are protecting the houses which could otherwise be firebombed and vandalised, as happened previously to these 1807 houses at numbers 62-66 Dalston Lane.

Fig. 83: Screen shot, Open Dalston blog, 14 July, 2010, <http://opendalston.blogspot.com/>

How has Your Hackney
changed?

Worst: Knocking down of The
local landmarks. e.g. Four Ace's club

Best: local farmers market

How has Your Hackney
changed?

From being a byword for crime, inner-
city degradation + urban decay, it's suddenly,
surprisingly become fashionable.

How has Your Hackney
changed?

I now live in 'fake Hackney'. TESCO express
+ over-priced shops surround me. All that
is Hackney is becoming lost. 'True Hackney'
can maybe be found northwards....?



Fig. 84: JF, 2009



Fig. 85: CL, 2009



Fig. 86: KC, 2009



Fig. 87: KC, 2009



Fig. 88: Dalston Junction



Fig. 89: Dalston Junction



Fig. 90: KC, 2009

What don't you like
about Your Hackney?

- litter! litter! litter!
- Hackney Council - corrupt
and incompetent

What don't you like
about Your Hackney?

Noise
dirt/litter
boarded up estates
terrible driving
crime and/or fear of crime

What don't you like
about Your Hackney?

New developments.
(un-wanted by
The PEOPLE of
Hackney)



Fig. 91: LT, 2009



Fig. 92: HF, 2009



Fig. 93: RS, 2009



Fig. 94: HF, 2009

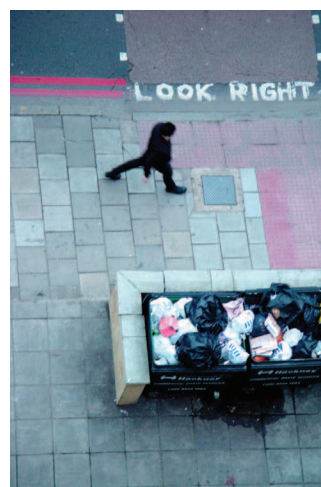


Fig. 95: AS, 2009

4.1 Exploring Hackney through words and pictures



Fig. 96: Shafton Road



Fig. 97: Paul Street



Fig. 98: Hackney Cut



Fig. 99: Rivington Street



Fig. 100: Ashwin Street



Fig. 101: Clissold Road



Fig. 102: Abbot Street



Fig. 103: East Road



Fig. 104: Ashwin Street

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Interesting Places and Famous Faces

Hackney's history is strongly associated with theatre. The Theatre (built in 1576) and the Curtain (1578) were both located in Shoreditch. The Theatre staged the first performances of some of William Shakespeare's plays, including *Romeo and Juliet*. St. Leonard's (or Shoreditch Church) was once known as the actors' church; those buried there include Richard Burbage, a contemporary of Shakespeare. The church is referred to in the nursery rhyme *Oranges and Lemons* ("When I am rich, says the bells of Shoreditch.")

There was also a strong theatre tradition in 19th century Shoreditch: most famous was the Britannia, run for many years by Sara Lane. The nursery rhyme, *Pop goes the Weasel*, makes reference to the Eagle pub, a large tavern on City Road that once had an adjoining music hall ("Up and down the City Road, in and out the Eagle, that's the way the money goes, pop goes the weasel").

Without question the most famous theatre in the borough is the Hackney Empire, which opened in 1901. This brought variety theatre to a part of London where entertainers like Harry Champion and Larry Adler could always be assured of large and appreciative audiences. The Empire's hall of fame also includes entertainers such as Charlie Chaplin, Marie Lloyd, Stan Laurel and George Formby.

Many famous people have lived or been educated in Hackney. Marc Bolan, the lead singer of the 70s 'Glam Rock' band T. Rex, was brought up in Stoke Newington. Daniel Defoe, author of *Robinson Crusoe*, also lived in Stoke Newington. The writer, Edgar Allan Poe, whose works include *The Pit* and *The Pendulum* and *The Raven*, went to the Manor House School which once stood on Stoke Newington Church Street.

Jessica Tandy, who won an Oscar for her performance in the film, *Driving Miss Daisy*, in 1990, was born in Geldeston Road in Clapton. In 1963 she was directed in the movie, *The Birds*, by Alfred Hitchcock, one of the most famous and influential film directors in cinematic history. Hitchcock's directorial career also had its origins in Hackney: *The Lodger* (1927) was filmed at the Gainsborough Studios in Shoreditch. This silent feature marked Hitchcock out as a unique talent and showed why he would later become known as "The Master of Suspense".

The newspaper cartoonist, Mel Calman, was born in Stamford Hill in the north of the borough. His simple, direct drawings and witty captions ensured he had a successful career spanning the *Daily Express*, *Sunday Telegraph* and *Sunday Times*.

The first bomb of World War One was dropped on Nevill Road in Stoke Newington. In more recent times, Albert Square, the setting for the BBC soap *EastEnders*, was modelled on Fassett Square in Dalston.

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Fig. 105: Screen shot, Hackney Council website, <http://www.hackney.gov.uk>



Fig. 106: *Hackney Gazette* headline, 2010



Fig. 107: *Hackney Gazette* headline, 2010



Fig. 108: *Hackney Gazette* headline, 2010



Fig. 109: *Hackney Gazette* headline, 2010

Crime Rate per 1000

	Hackney (2005/6)	Hackney (2009/10)	London (2009/10)
Total offences	150.53	135.2	115.62
Burglary	17.13	12.6	12.94
Criminal damage	15.93	11.18	12.30
Drug offences	10.26	16.49*	9.39
Fraud and forgery	4.9	4.37	5.33
Offences against vehicles	26.55	15.65	14.29
Other offences	1.70	1.93	1.67
Other theft offences	43.49	34.73	29.29
Robbery	8.96	5.13	4.67
Sexual offences	2.24	2.19	1.38
Violence against the person	36.08	31.29	24.34

Source: Home Office & Met Police

*This increase in offences recorded can be attributed to police proactivity in tackling drug offences, namely cannabis warnings

Tenure

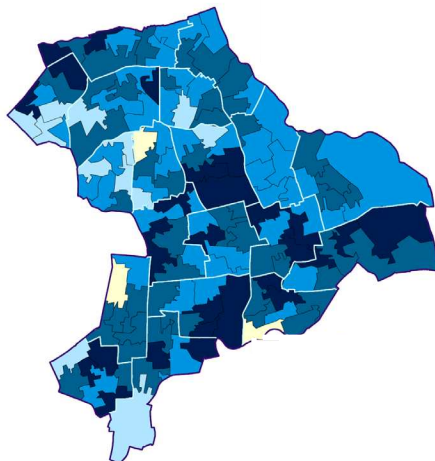
	Hackney (2008)	London (2007)	England (2007)
Owner occupied	30%	57%	70%
Private rented	23%	20%	13%
RSL rented	23%	9%	8%
Council rented	24%	14%	9%

Source: CLG, 2007, Hackney Housing Needs Survey 2008

House Prices

	Hackney	London	England
Detached	£544, 323	£596, 085	£259, 546
Semi Detached	£564,047	£346, 676	£157, 397
Terraced	£435,445	£309, 091	£127, 378
Maisonette / Flat	£303,750	£303, 346	£154, 576
All	£359,679	£338, 027	£166, 072

Source: Land Registry June 2010

Poverty & Deprivation**Index of Multiple Deprivation in Hackney
(Most deprived areas in England)**

■ In 5% most deprived SOAs in England	(27)
■ In 5-10% most deprived SOAs in England	(49)
■ In 10-20% most deprived SOAs in England	(46)
■ In 20-30% most deprived SOAs in England	(12)
■ In 30-40% most deprived SOAs in England	(3)
□ Outside the top 40% most deprived SOAs	(0)

Source: IMD, 2007

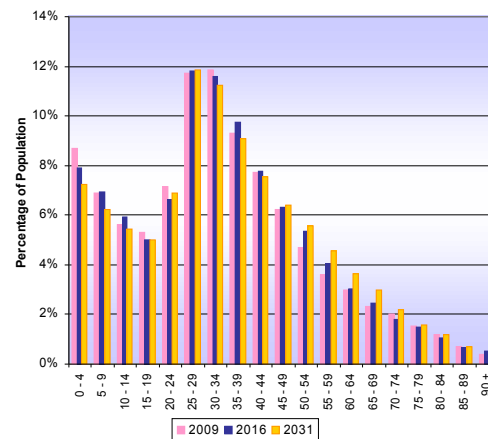
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More information available in the Borough Profile, at
<http://www.hackney.gov.uk/xp-boroughprofile.htm>

**Key Facts & Figures****Population**

	ONS Count	Mayhew (local) count
Male	105,600	110, 280
Female	110,400	112,891
Total	216,200	223,171

Source: ONS Mid Year Estimates 2009, Mayhew Study 2007

Age Structure: Current and Projected

Source: GLA Population Projections for Hackney, 2009

Produced by the Strategic Policy & Research Team
August 2010

Fig. 110: Key facts and figures, Hackney Council, available at
www.hackney.gov.uk

Ethnicity

	Hackney	London	England
White: British	48.45%	57.72%	83.65%
White: Irish	2.38%	2.40%	1.12%
White: Other White	10.97%	8.92%	3.48%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	1.57%	1.01%	0.55%
Mixed: White and Black African	0.81%	0.54%	0.22%
Mixed: White and Asian	0.86%	1%	0.51%
Mixed: Other Mixed	1.29%	0.97%	0.41%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	4.15%	6.64%	2.58%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	1.62%	2.37%	1.77%
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	2.81%	2.31%	0.69%
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	1%	2.02%	0.66%
Black or Black British: Black Caribbean	8.68%	4.25%	1.17%
Black or Black British: Black African	10.11%	5.53%	1.43%
Black or Black British: Other Black	2.15%	0.84%	0.23%
Chinese	1.38%	1.52%	0.78%
Other Ethnic Group	1.81%	1.96%	0.74%

Source: ONS Mid Year Estimates, 2007

Note: The Charedi population is estimated to be 7% (Mayhew, 2007). The Turkish population is estimated to be 6% (Household Survey, 2004). These populations are often captured in White British/White Other or Other Ethnic Group.

Languages Spoken

Language	Percentage of Households
Turkish	5.5%
Yiddish	5.2%
French	2.2%
Gujerati	1.8%
Bengali	1.6%
Yoruba	1.3%
Spanish	1.0%
Punjabi	1.0%

Source: Hackney Household Survey 2004. Households with another or main language other than English. Languages spoken by 1% or more of households shown.

GCSE Results

	Hackney (2006)	Hackney (2009)	England (2009)
Pupils gaining 5 A*-C inc. English & Maths	36.7%	52.2%	50.7%
Pupils gaining 5 A-C	50.9%	66.9%	69.8%

Source: DCSF. 2006 figures given to show local trend.

Qualifications

	Hackney (2006)	Hackney (2009)	London (2009)	Britain (2009)
NVQ 4+	32.5%	46%	39.7%	29.9%
NVQ 3 only	8.9%	6.6%	11.9%	15.5%
NVQ 2 only	12.2%	9.7%	11.4%	16.1%
NVQ 1 only	6.8%	7.2%	9.4%	13.5%
Trade Apprenticeships	1.8%	1.3%	1.6%	4.0%
Other qualifications	13.5%	15%	14.3%	8.8%
No Qualifications	24.3%	14.2%	11.8%	12.3%

Source: Annual Population Survey. 2006 figures given to show local trend. 2009 data relates to the period Jan 2009 – Dec 2009.

Employment

	Hackney (2005)	Hackney (2009)	London (2009)	Britain (2009)
In employment	55.4%	68.8%	68.3%	70.7%
Employees	44.6%	56.7%	57.2%	61.4%
Self-employed	10.6%	11.7%	10.7%	9.0%
Unemployed	11.6%	9.4%	9.1%	7.8%

Source: ONS, Apr 2004 – Mar 2005 & Jan 2009 – Dec 2009.

Note: % for those of working age, except unemployment which is % of economically active population. 2005 figures given to show local trend.

Average Earnings – Full Time Workers

	Hackney	London	Britain
Weekly Pay			
All workers	£573.0	£598.6	£491.0
Male workers	£612.8	£642.0	£543.4
Female workers	£530.4	£551.0	£426.6
Hourly Pay			
All workers	£14.63	£15.60	£12.47
Male workers	£14.66	£16.27	£13.16
Female workers	£14.54	£14.86	£11.45

Source: Earnings by residence, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2009

Benefit Claimants

	Hackney (2006)	Hackney (2009)	London (2009)	Britain (2009)
Total claimants	23.2%	21.6%	14.6%	15.0%
Job seekers	5.4%	6.2%	4.0%	3.8%
ESA and incapacity benefits	9.4%	8.8%	5.9%	6.7%
Lone parents	5.5%	3.9%	2.5%	1.8%
Carers	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%	1.1%
Others on income related benefits	1.3%	0.9%	0.5%	0.5%
Disabled	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	1.0%
Bereaved	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
Key out-of-work benefits†	21.5%	19.8%	12.9%	12.7%

Source: DWP benefit claimants, May 2006 & Nov 2009.

† Key out-of-work benefits consists of: job seekers, incapacity benefits, lone parents and others on income related benefits

Note: % is a proportion of resident working age population of area

Disability Living Allowance Claimants

	Hackney (2006)	Hackney (2008)	London (2008)	Britain (2008)
Number of Claimants	10,150	10,990	310,510	2,537,590
Proportion of Population on DLA	4.9%	5.1%	4%	4.2%

Source: ONS, August 2006 & 2009.

Life Expectancy

	Hackney (1991-93)	Hackney (2006-08)	London (2006-08)	Britain (2006-08)
Males	71.3	75.9	78.2	77.82
Females	77.4	82.2	82.7	81.95

Source: Life expectancy at birth rates, NCHOD 2005-2007.

Fig. 111: Key facts and figures, Hackney Council, available at www.hackney.gov.uk



Fig. 112: Olympic site hoardings, River Lea Navigation



Fig. 113: Construction, East London line, Middleton Road



Fig. 114: Dalston Junction station, Dalston Lane



Fig. 115: Hearn Street

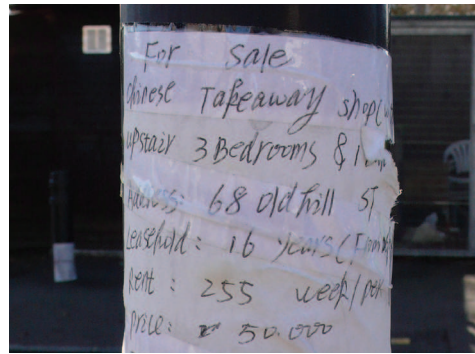


Fig. 116: Clapton Common



Fig. 117: Kingsland Road



Fig. 118: Dunston Road



Fig. 119: Ridley Road Market



Fig. 120: Victoria Park Road



Fig. 121: Andre Street



Fig. 122: Cazenove Road



Fig. 123: HF, 2009



Fig. 124: HF, 2009



Fig. 125: Goalposts, Hackney Marshes



Fig. 126: JF, 2009



Fig. 127: EB, 2009



Fig. 128: KC, 2009



Fig. 129: JK, 2009



Fig. 130: HF, 2009

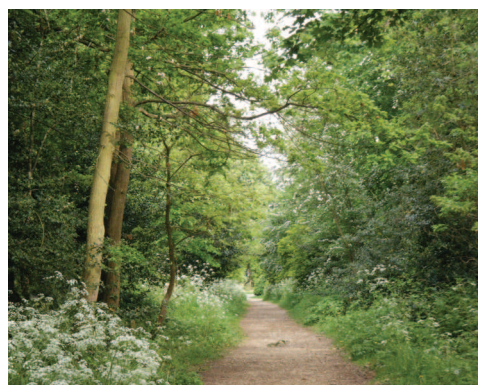


Fig. 131: EB, 2009

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News > **UK news**

Two more die on 'murder mile'

Many have witnessed gangland-style savagery in the London borough of Hackney, yet few will admit it, writes crime correspondent Tony Thompson

Tony Thompson, crime correspondent
The Observer, Sunday 22 April 2001
[Article history](#)

The shots rang out just after 5am yesterday in London's Lower Clapton Road, punching fist-sized holes into the side of the BMW and hitting both passenger and driver. The car slewed on an angle, ploughing into three pedestrians, smashing a Nissan Micra and finally coming to rest against the side of a night bus.

The Hackney police arrived minutes later to find a 250-metre trail of smashed glass, twisted metal and broken bodies - a scene more reminiscent of Beirut or the Bronx than London.

But when local people woke up to the horrific scene, they simply went about their business. Some people even brought out their children to look at the police cordons.

In the past two years there have been at least six gangland-style executions in streets surrounding Lower and Upper Clapton Roads. There have been many other woundings and countless occasions on which weapons have been produced and fired.

The London borough of Hackney now has the distinction of being the place where you are more likely to hear the sound of gunshots than anywhere else in Britain. Many of the Clapton Road shootings have stood out because of the levels of ruthlessness and brutality involved. Gunmen have pursued their victims in broad daylight, finishing them off at point blank range in front of streets packed with witnesses.

Fig. 132: Screen shot, *The Observer*, 22 April, 2001



Fig. 133: JJ, 2009



Fig. 134: CL, 2009



Fig. 135: RM, 2009



Fig. 136: LR, 2009



Fig. 137: JK, 2009

What's the best thing
about Your Hackney?

The trees, the buses, the people

What's the best thing
about Your Hackney?

Neighbourhoods & friendships
of most people. We all
know one another in my
road even if we don't all
like one another!

What's the best thing
about Your Hackney?

THE BEST THING ABOUT HACKNEY IS
ITS VARIETY, ~~AND~~ NOISE, BUSINESS, FOOD,
PUBS, PEOPLE AND FRIENDS.

I would be asked for an article whenever anything ghoulish or disastrous happened in Hackney—the place could only achieve national interest under the rubric of monstrosity. I wasn't aiming to minimise the horrors that do indeed occur in the inner city, but if you're looking for a place where tolerance and reciprocal humanity are to be found at their best, you would probably do better in Hackney than in Tunbridge Wells.

Patrick Wright (2001)

4.1 Exploring Hackney through words and pictures



Fig. 138: Cricket match, London Fields



Fig. 139: Carnival, Stoke Newington Church Street



Fig. 140: RK, 2009



Fig. 141: Springfield Park



Fig. 142: London Fields

I was born in 1934 in the old Hackney Hospital. In 1941 when I was 7 years old I was evacuated from Gayhurst Road Infant School with an older girl (who I didn't know) to look after me. We were taken by train to a farm in Norfolk, but I didn't stay there long as I kept crying—missing my mother. Eventually she came to fetch me and took me back home. From home we were again evacuated—with my baby brother who was born in April 1940—to Thetford and then to Bolton, Lancashire. There we were lodged in a millionaire's house, which was quite grand as I remember, with servants. But my mother did not get on with the servants and they didn't like us Londoners so my mother decided to take us home again back to the bombs! The lady of the house begged us not to go back to London but stay there, but my mother wanted to get back home. My father was in the army and serving in Italy and North Africa.

During one of the air raids, my mother, baby brother and I were walking home through London Fields, E8 (there were shelters running underground the whole length of one of the fields) when suddenly the sound of a V1 rocket above, stopped its sound, which meant it was about to drop hitting the ground and explode. We just managed to descend to the bottom of the stairs to the shelter when the stair well collapsed in on us. The navy soldier at the top of the stairs hadn't managed to get down them so he was buried and had a hole in his leg. We were pulled out of the shelter by air raid wardens who patrolled the area during a raid. I can remember walking further along the path in the fields with my mother carrying my baby brother who was screaming. The shock of what happened made him go cross-eyed for a time. I cannot remember any more of the incident. During further raids, whilst at home—during the night—we had to walk in our night clothes to our shelter in the garden of where we lived.

MC, 2009

4.1 Exploring Hackney through words and pictures



Fig. 143: JC, 2009



Fig. 144: Regent's Canal



Fig. 145: LR, 2009



Fig. 146: JJ, 2009



Fig. 147: Regent's Canal



Fig. 148: HM, 2009



Fig. 149: Hackney Marshes




Fig. 150: River Lea Navigation

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I Love Hackney

I Love Hackney started as an exhibition at Hackney Museum featuring local artists and performers. Valentine Day 2006 saw the launch of the wider campaign with an event in Hackney's Town Hall Square. This event promoted the Council's aims of making Hackney safer, cleaner and greener and encouraged residents to play an active role in looking after Hackney by not dropping litter and by recycling.

Posters promoting the safer, cleaner, greener themes were put up around Hackney including on some London buses. A second poster campaign using lamppost banners started in August 2006.



I Love Hackney events continued in 2007 with a best place competition, photographic competition and fair at Town Hall Square

I Love Hackney has been very successful with many residents taking part - I Love Hackney badges and T-shirts are very popular and worn with pride!

Hackney is a very cohesive community. 83% of residents agreed in response to the 2007 Residents' Survey that their neighbourhood is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

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Fig. 151: Screen shot, 'I Love Hackney', Hackney Council website, <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/>

NEWS POLITICS WHAT'S ON COMMENT CULTURE LIFE & STYLE

Artists launch 'Keep Hackney Crap' campaign

BADGES and t-shirts emblazoned with the unlikely slogan, 'Keep Hackney Crap' have appeared as part of a campaign by The EEL

Anna Davies

Saturday 6 June 2009

1
tweet

retweet



BADGES and t-shirts emblazoned with the unlikely slogan, 'Keep Hackney Crap' have appeared as part of a campaign set up by *The Eel* magazine in response to a comment Mayor Jules Pipe made last year.

Tony Collins from *The Eel*, which is produced by local artists, said: "When Jules Pipe accused opponents of the Dalston regeneration scheme of wanting to 'keep Hackney crap', many

local luminaries were up in arms.

"Implicit in Pipe's comment is a belief that he is actually making things better and that what is currently there is not worth keeping. This betrays a negative attitude to the area he is meant to represent. However, one person's crap is another person's gold.

"*The Eel* likes to celebrate that which is forgotten and marginalised. The 'Keep Hackney Crap' campaign is about retaining the things which genuinely make an area unique and loved.

"It is not reactionary to want to keep the little gems that characterise an area. Change will always come by stealth, force or evolution. We prefer the latter and do not believe it gets in the way of the genuine need to improve the living standards of the poorest."

SHARE    ...

Fig. 152: Screen shot, 'Keep Hackney Crap', *Hackney Citizen*, 6 June, 2009, <http://www.hackneycitizen.co.uk/>



Fig. 153: Ridley Road Market



Fig. 154: Homerton High Street



Fig. 155: Stamford Hill



Fig. 156: Stoke Newington Road



Fig. 157: Stamford Hill



Fig. 158: Kingsland Road



Fig. 159: Tyssen Road



Fig. 160: Chatsworth Road



Fig. 161: Kingsland Road

4.1 Exploring Hackney through words and pictures



Fig. 162: RK, 2009



Fig. 163: JK, 2009



Fig. 164: Ridley Road Market



Fig. 165: Ridley Rd Market



Fig. 166: Ridley Rd Market



Fig. 167: KC, 2009



Fig. 168: JK, 2009



Fig. 169: MC, 2009



Fig. 170: JC, 2009

Walking down Ridley Road, amongst the hustle of the market you feel as though you have travelled half way across the world, each stall has its own uniqueness. Small pockets of culture from almost every corner of the world. Food, music, dialects change as you venture further into the market. Towards the end of the road, where the east end market stalls turn into iron shacks, I was really taken aback by how different it felt. It was like nowhere I had been before. If I imagined what a small village in Africa was like, it would not be far off.

On this particular day, I wanted to take a photograph of a bright blue container (used for storage I assume). It was lodged between 'God's First Hairdresser's' and a food 'shack'. As I took the photograph, a Ghanaian woman came running towards me, shouting and waving her arms. Startled, I asked her what the problem was, as no body/person was in the photographs. The woman believed I had been sent by the 'devil' to take photographs of her soul. I tried to explain myself, tried to show her the photograph but it did not matter, she still continued to suggest I was there to take pictures of her soul. As not to agitate the situation further, I made my apologies, she told me never to return...

I was kind of freaked out by the whole thing. I later discovered that Ghanaians do believe cameras/photographs have the ability to capture a person's soul.

Big cultural eye opener to say the least.

SG, 2009



Fig. 171: Food, Ridley Road Market



Fig. 172: Eggs, Ridley Road Market



Fig. 173: Fish, Ridley Road Market



Fig. 174: Tripe, Ridley Road Market



Fig. 175: Fruit, Ridley Road Market



Fig. 176: SG, 2009



Fig. 177: RK, 2009



Fig. 178: Kingsland High Street



Fig. 179: Kingsland Road



Fig. 180: Ridley Rd Market



Fig. 181: SG, 2009



Fig. 182: Ridley Road Market



Fig. 183: Ridley Road Market



Fig. 184: Ridley Road Market



Fig. 185: Ridley Road Market



Fig. 186: Andu Internet Café, Kingsland Road



Fig. 187: Sharon's Bakery, Stamford Hill



Fig. 188: Sömine, Kingsland High St



Fig. 189: Roti Stop, Stamford Hill



Fig. 190: Song Que Café, Kingsland Road



Fig. 191: Ridley Road Market



Fig. 192: Café Z Bar, Stoke Newington High Street



Fig. 193: SG, 2009

The Worst Place To Live In Britain Is...



6

0



Share

3:30pm UK, Sunday October 22, 2006

London's district of Hackney has been slammed as the worst place to live in the UK, according to a poll. It came bottom of the heap out of all the UK's 434 local authorities based on five criteria - crime, environment, lifestyle, education and employment.



Hackney marshes

But there is good news for Hull as last year's worst place to live is not to be seen at all in the 2006 bottom 10.

Also disappearing off the list since last year are Mansfield and Salford.

But the repeat offenders are listed as the City of Nottingham, Strabane, Hackney, Middlesbrough, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil.

Hackney has its defenders though, with its mayor Jules Pipe, saying:

"Of course Hackney has problems, as do all inner city boroughs, but it is an amazing place to live.

"It is diverse and exciting with fantastic architecture, a vibrant arts and cultural scene, and a bright future as an Olympic borough."

The research was carried out for Channel 4's The Best and Worst Places to Live in the UK: 2006.

Here are the results for the worst places to live:

1. Hackney, east London
2. Tower Hamlets, east London
3. Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales
4. Newham, east London
5. Islington, north London
6. Middlesbrough, North East

Fig. 194: Screen shot, 'The worst place to live in Britain is...', Sky News, 22 Oct, 2006, <http://news.sky.com/skynews/>

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Welcome to Dalston, now the coolest place in Britain

Paul Flynn

The Guardian, Monday 27 April 2009

[Article history](#)



Dalston, east London: where everyone 'is surprisingly accepting'. Photograph: Aliaksandr Ilyukevich/Loop Images/Corbis

Long dismissed as a fading east London suburb with a chaotic daily market, a strip of cheap Turkish restaurants and a rudimentary relationship with street hygiene, Dalston E8 now finds itself the unlikely owner of Britain's coolest postcode. Its roll call of fashion habitués reads like a Who's Who of past and present design figureheads - Christopher Kane, Gareth Pugh and Marius Schwab have set up shop there, while old guard visionaries Pam Hogg, Terry De Havilland and Jimmy Choo are frequently out and about.

Fig. 195: Screen shot, 'Welcome to Dalston, now the coolest place in Britain', *The Guardian*, 27 April, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk>



Fig. 196: RK, 2009



Fig. 197: RK, 2009



Fig. 198: RK, 2009



Fig. 199: RK, 2009



Fig. 200: KC, 2009

5

**Developing and testing the
geo/graphic design process:
Understanding place through practice**

This chapter gives an overview of the key concerns that inspired, and are explored through, this practice-led research. It also offers a brief introduction to each of the design test projects that have been undertaken in order to develop the geo/graphic design process, and focuses this discussion on their context in relation to conceptual subject matter, and the London borough of Hackney. The central theoretical concerns of the work, with regard to an understanding of place, can be simplified as those of 'process' (Massey 1994, 2005) and 'pause' (Tuan 1977), as discussed in chapter one. The primary site of exploration of these contrasting geographical notions within the context of graphic design practice is the page. I use the term page not to imply a singular entity, but rather to act as a collective noun for the basis of all print based graphic design forms of communication—from single sheet, large format posters, to multi-page documents such as books or newspapers. This graphic exploration of the possibility of the page to represent place and to visually reflect and refract notions of pause and process draws on Mermoz's (1995, 1998, 2002 & Mau & Mermoz 2004) assertion that one should work typographically at 'the level of the text' and challenges Ingold's (2007) belief that the page has 'lost its voice', and that language has been 'silenced' since the advent of mechanical print. Therefore, the prime theoretical and practical concerns of this work can be neatly summed up as the four Ps: place, page, pause, and process.

5.1 An overview of key concerns

Each of the design test projects engages with some or all of these theoretical concerns and are primarily developed from ethnographic research undertaken within Hackney, and documentary research into the borough. However, they are also underpinned and inspired by theoretical research undertaken into the representation of everyday life and place within cultural geography and ethnography. This theoretical research offers the graphic designer positions to respond to in terms of the possibilities (or alleged lack thereof) of representation—for example the discussions stemming from Thrift's (1996) non-representational theory; Kitchen & Dodge's (2007) 'mappings'; or Del Casino & Hanna's (2006) 'map spaces'. It also offers a greater understanding of how some of the research gathered in Hackney can both be seen to construct place and also inform one's understanding of it—for example Shield's (1991) theories of 'place-image'. Approaches developed from further theoretical research within art and design that relate to those central concerns are also

explored in conjunction with, or in productive opposition to, geographic or ethnographic thinking. For example, Barthes' (1977) writing on the death of the author; the notion of 'Fluxkits' enabling a new 'performance' with each reading; the temporal space of the book (Carrion 2001, Hochuli 1996 and Mau 2000); the idea of 'typography as language in performance' (Mermoz 1995: np); and, typography as a 'generative structure of meanings' (Mermoz 2001: 1) all offer strategies for developing graphic and typographic interventions that enable the staging of something other than a mimetic, static, re-enactment of place. That these theoretical links are made with and through the practice is critical as this enables the productive, dialogical development of theory and practice.

If this geo/graphic design process is to be put into practice successfully—in a variety of places, by a variety of practitioners—it needs to be flexible enough, yet also rigorous and robust enough, to respond to a variety of contexts. The practice therefore consists of multiple design test projects in order to explore a range of contexts. Other concerns also contributed to the decision to undertake a series of test projects. Highmore (2002) suggests that a 'toolkit' is needed to understand the polyphonic nature of the everyday. To that end a variety of methods have been adopted in exploring Hackney, and generating 'data' or content for use in design projects. I use the word 'data' in inverted commas, as from my perspective as a designer, I am perhaps more used to the notion of 'content'. For me, the word data draws close associations with notions of positivist, quantitative studies, and whilst a small amount of quantitative analysis has been applied to some 'data', the majority gathered throughout the course of this research is of the type that rewards a more qualitative analysis. Indeed some of the methods used to generate 'data' in this research—for example the probes, try to resist classification and alignment with the traditional methods of social science research and, therefore the returns might not be classified as data in quite the usual way. Participants have contributed much of this 'data', and it therefore reflects diverse perspectives on Hackney.

In keeping with the polyphonic nature of the findings I suggest the design test projects should also explore a variety of methods and approaches, both in terms of content and execution. Using multiple methods to gather 'evidence' is one way traditional social science research achieves 'triangulation' in order to validate findings. However, Richardson (2000: 934) suggests that within a postmodern world we should 'crystallize' rather

than triangulate for there are many more than 'three sides' from which we view the world. The metaphor of the crystal implies an emergent, multi-faceted approach, one that again sits well with the development of multiple projects, content, contexts, and concepts. However, there is also a danger that by suggesting the work is capable of being 'validated', one could misinterpret this as a search for 'truth'. Just as there is no one overarching reality in terms of place, neither is there one 'correct' form of geo/graphic re/presentation.

The investigation of different contexts, content and concepts in the practice also enables the work to move beyond a repetitive, formulaic, circular journey from each problem to solution. The different theoretical and contextual positions that underpin the practice enable a broader perspective to be brought to the action-reflection cycle (McNiff & Whitehead 2006: 9) as during both reflection-in-action and in reflection-on-action I draw on elements that are outside of my graphic design education and experience and interpret them through my graphic design practice. Although the design projects all cover subject matter that is different, many aspects of their process are interlinked, and the projects were used to build understanding incrementally. So the process of reflection-in and -on action, applied to each project as it developed, was also applied to the practice as a whole—each project builds on the previous projects in some way. Written reflection was undertaken in sketchbooks and online—on a blog set up specifically for this purpose. The reflective process therefore channels directly into the writing process, which in turn links the theory and the practice. It is, as MacLeod (2000: 3) describes, a 'seesaw' like process. I see this as the development of a symbiotic relationship between writing and design/theory and practice, which furthers my understanding of the research. It is also an iterative process, one that enables the generation of productive ideas that, when tested through practice, continue to develop the geo/graphic design process.

Each design test project interrogates and evidences different aspects of that process, for example, alternative approaches to place—from an experiential, 'immediate' engagement to a different type of understanding built up over a longer timescale; content generation and interaction with research participants; the relationship between analysis and design; subjectivity, editing and authorship; the relationship between form and content; the possibilities of the book as a temporal, three-dimensional,

interactive space; and, the possibilities of the page as place. The following chapters do not, however, chronologically chart the development of the design test projects. Rather they are each written thematically, discussing and drawing together key findings from different stages of the research. These findings essentially articulate the geo/graphic design process. However, to enable the reader to have an understanding of the whole set of design test projects undertaken, this chapter concludes with a brief summary of each one, and this does reflect the chronological development of the design test projects throughout the course of the research. In particular, this summary gives the context for the development of each individual project in relation to the London borough of Hackney and its subject matter.

5.2 The design test projects

Type Cast & Death of the Author

The first two, interrelated design test projects developed from an analysis of the front page headlines in the *Hackney Gazette* between January 2007 and December 2008. Both test projects were produced using letterpress on newsprint stock and take the physical form of a newspaper, 30 x 45cm in size. The *Hackney Gazette*, printed weekly, is the primary local newspaper available for purchase in the borough and, according to ABC figures, had a circulation of approximately 7,500 copies per week in 2009 ('ABC figures: How all the weeklies performed', 2010: np). Established in 1864, the newspaper perceives itself as a 'standard bearer for its readers' and states that

It can be relied on for factual, accurate and unbiased reporting as well as authoritative comment and opinion. One of its greatest strengths is it has always kept its roots firmly fixed in the community and continues to champion the causes important to local people and to campaign on their behalf. ('Hackney Gazette', nd)

Tabloid in format, many of its headlines are tabloid in nature, centring on violence, sex, murder, and council corruption. For example;

FAT CAT SALARY FURY, 15 March, 2007

GUN FRENZY PARK PANIC, 19 April, 2007

TEENAGE RAPISTS CAGED, 17 May, 2007

BEATEN BUILDER DIES, 12 July, 2007

The first few pages of *Type Cast* (fig. 201) feature short passages of text that explore the impact these headlines have on Hackney, and the development of a particular perception of the borough, in relation to Shields' (1991) concept of 'place-image'. These texts are followed by a series of pages containing examples of the headlines that create such a lingering, negative labeling of place.

Death of the Author (fig. 202) draws on Barthes' (1977) thinking and uses the same set of headlines to explore the active role the reader plays in constructing meaning from sentences that, if one applied traditional grammatical rules to them, would make no sense at all—for example, 'GUN FRENZY PARK PANIC'. The most emotive words used to describe the consequence of the event being reported on during the two years under analysis were listed in alphabetical order. Within this list consecutive words appeared to construct believable headlines, for example

CRITICAL DRAMA FRENZY

TERROR THREAT TRAGEDY

OUTRAGE OUTBREAK

If seen on a newsstand the reader, being familiar with this type of language set in bold, capitalised typography, would recognise it as a headline and automatically read it in a way that makes sense, regardless of its unconventional grammatical form. Therefore, through the act of viewing the typography and reading the words, the 'sentences' move from a passive, arbitrary, alphabetical context, to an active one, reacting with each other and generating a narrative informed by the reader's own cultural experience. It is, therefore, the reader, through their interaction with the typographic intervention, that 'writes' this text. As Barthes says, 'a text's unity lies not in its origin, but in its destination' and 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author' (Barthes 1977: 148).

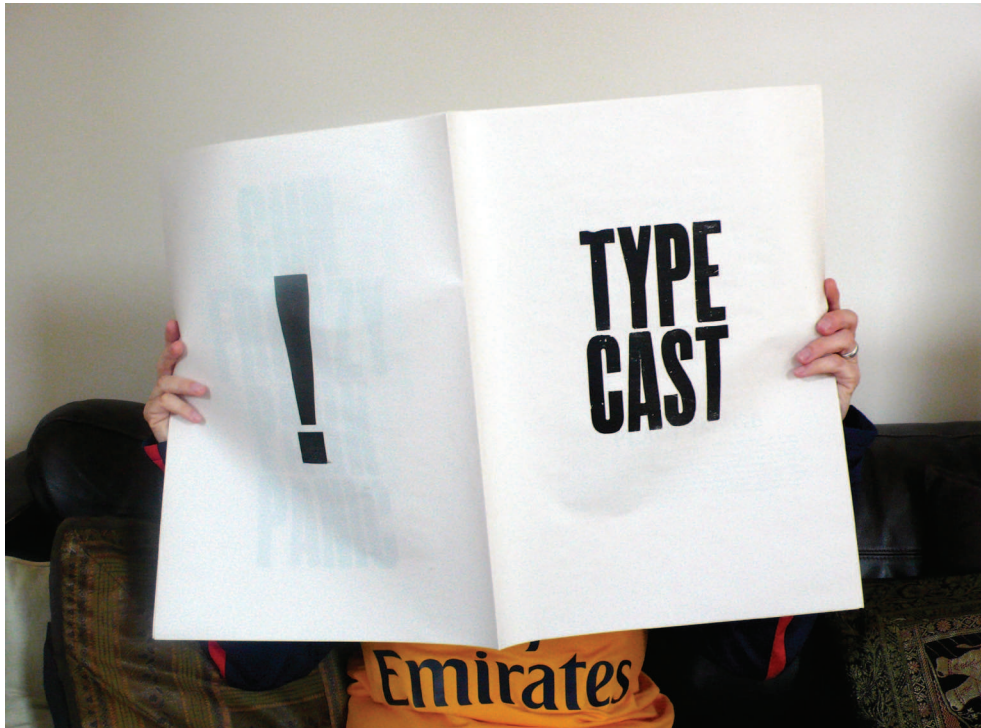


Fig. 201: *Type Cast*: cover



Fig. 202: *Death of the Author*: cover

Hackney conversations

In early 2009 I made a successful application to take part in the *Hackney Transients Art Project (HTAP)*. HTAP's approach focused on the investigation of everyday experience within Hackney as 'a catalyst for making new art works and creative processes' ('htap' undated: np). The project brought together twelve artists and designers and two curators in an attempt to investigate ongoing changes in Hackney, accelerated through flows of people and ideas. It culminated in an exhibition—*In/flux*—held at a temporary gallery space on Kingsland Road in September 2009. The *Hackney conversations* (fig. 203) series of eight letterpress prints (50 x 68cm in size), developed as part of HTAP was inspired by Massey's (1994, 2005) theories of place as process and a site of spontaneous connections and disconnections. As I explored Hackney and recorded traces of human intervention in the environment, I became aware that within what I might term my own primary interactions, I was also experiencing, and moving in and out of, others' interactions. This was most evident in the way that I would overhear fragments of conversations that were happening in passing on the street, or in coffee shops, for example. More often than not I would never know the whole context—how the people knew each other, to who or what they were referring—it was something of a simultaneous connection and disconnection which seemed to reflect Massey's ideas of place particularly well. So I began to seek out and record such snatches deliberately. For example:

I just don't know. I just don't know what to do anymore.
(Hertford Road, 20.04.09)

Sometimes I make, sometimes I don't. Allah know what he is
doing. (Ridley Road Market, 21.04.09)

Everyone else in the school have all got their jumpers signed. All
year elevens. But I get into trouble. (Dunston Road, 20.05.09)

—You alright?
—Yes alright.
—You have a nice Easter?
—Yes, I went to Church and everything... Who told you about
my Easter?
—It was my Easter too. (Kingsland Road, 24.03.09)



Fig. 203: **Hackney Conversations**: examples of prints

Over the course of two months I collected a series that I felt reflected something of the diversity of Hackney in respect of differing subject matter, age and religious beliefs. The tone of voice also differed throughout the snatches conversation. For example, the ‘I just don’t know’ seems somehow profoundly sad, as if the speaker was in a hopeless situation, whereas the ‘Allah’ seems to be spoken by someone who is more relaxed, and manages to maintain a happy-go-lucky approach to the ups and downs in their life. However, because these statements are fragments and their context and speaker remain unavailable to us for corroboration, once again it is the reader, who ‘writes the text’ when they engage with the typographic interventions contained within the prints.

Type Cast participative maps

Undertaken through my involvement with *HTAP*, and as part of the *Pattern Making for Beginners (PMFB)* (fig. 204) event at the 2009 *Hackney Wicked* festival, and the *In/flux* (fig. 205) exhibition, these maps were developed directly from the *Type Cast* design test project. I was interested to see whether the predominantly negative perception of Hackney generated by the media would be reflected in the opinions of people who had their own experiences of the borough. Both maps focused on the use of language and typography, and interactive ways of engaging people with place in order to gather ‘data’. Participants were invited to share their descriptions of Hackney generally, or of a particular place in the borough. AT *PMFB* participants’ statements were written onto small cards, then printed onto the map using wooden letterpress blocks; at *In/flux* participants were able to write their own responses onto the maps. Both maps were produced on A0 size paper and simply showed the outline of Hackney with no defining landmarks. Both maps record a range of types of statements—from the factual, to the poetic, to the political—although the time consuming nature of the process at *PMFB* led to statements that were much shorter than many of those at *In/flux*. Statements from the *PMFB* map included:

Celebrate diversity

Lively but irritating

Grotty



Fig. 204: **Type Cast** mapat Pattern Making for Beginners (PMFB)



Fig. 205: Type Cast map at In/flux exhibition

Middle Class (in relation to Stoke Newington)

Its days are numbered (in relation to Hackney Wick and the impending Olympics)

At *In/flux* statements included:

I wish I lived here (in relation to Lauriston ‘village’)

Too many one speed racers (in relation to Broadway Market)

An argument about the class system outside Poundstretcher

We don’t want the Olympics

We do want the Olympics

I had originally intended the work to be a ‘data’ gathering exercise, to give me further descriptions to analyse in a similar way to that of the *Type Cast* test project. However, after both were completed I felt that they contained enough content of interest and enough visual interest not to be developed or interpreted within the context of a further design test project. They also included such a diverse array of responses—often very personal—that the spread of content would be almost impossible to analyse with a view to reaching some kind of conclusion. So, it is the participative process of construction that is of most interest with regard to this research.

The following three design test projects effectively act as a trilogy. Each deals, broadly, with objects in relation to place, but these are objects of diverse types and contexts. These test projects can be seen to be exploring place incrementally, through a micro to macro approach, or perhaps from private to public. The focus on objects also enables an exploration of contrasting issues relating to place and temporality, such as stability and change or the desire to sometimes arrest or control the continuous nature of place. As Gregson (2007: 25) states, ‘both enduringness and transience are key temporalities in the state of being at home’.

Stuff

The *Stuff* design test project (fig. 206) was inspired by several responses to the postcard in the cultural probe pack that asks ‘What makes your house a home?’ In *The meaning of things: Domestic symbols and the self*, Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton (1981) suggest that:

Few English words are filled with the emotional meaning of the word 'home'. It brings to mind one's childhood, the roots of one's being, the security of a private enclave where one can be free and in control of one's life. (1981: 121)



*Fig. 206: **Stuff**: front cover*

Many of the answers to the question about home listed items that related to memories and to the process of one's life unfolding over time. As Blunt & Dowling (2006: 114) have stated, many people's homes are 'sites of memory, filled with objects to remind them of family and events'. Here, place is the intimate space of home—respondents talked about being able to 'close the door and shut the world out'—this is place that is given personal meaning by these objects.

Home is much more than a house or the physical structure in which we dwell. Home is both a place or physical location and a set of feelings... home is a relation between material and imaginative realms and processes... (Blunt & Dowling 2006: 254).

Things like photographs, travel souvenirs and childhood toys become autobiographical objects and form a spatial representation of identity—an

autotopography, a 'physical map of memory, history and belief' (Gonzalez 1995: 133–4). Such objects can also be used to create a kind of 'pause' within the participants' ongoing lives. A chipped, blue mug from Berlin is more than that—it is a memory of a time and a place, of a shared experience—it enables one to suspend the daily grind and transport oneself back to a particular moment. Integral to who we are is a sense of our past and such possessions act as mnemonic devices that can reconstruct the past within the present (Gonzalez 1995: 136). Each item has a very particular, and more importantly, personal code of signification—a tatty childhood suitcase redolent with memories and remembered images for its owner, is another person's rubbish.

One can perhaps see a relationship with the controversy over the ongoing gentrification and 'regeneration' of parts of Hackney—residents can control the space of their own homes and keep things that may no longer be functional in a practical sense, but that function in an emotional way. They have less power when it comes to the demolition of places such as the Four Aces Club⁵ or the Georgian terrace of houses in Ashwin Street⁶.

The content for the design test project consists of four different texts; an essay written about stuff and collecting; a participant's life story written in relation to their stuff habit; segments of conversation between myself and a participant about their stuff; and, a range of memories and photographs, of particular items referred to in their answers, provided by participants. These different texts and images are brought together within a small

5 The Four Aces club opened in 1966 on the site of an old Victorian theatre. During the 1970s it became the home of Black music in north London. In the 1980s, the building also housed the Labyrinth club—a key part of the London rave scene. However, by 1998 there was talk of the reopening of Dalston Junction station and, despite thousands petitioning the council, the occupiers were evicted and the buildings boarded up. By 2006 the magnificent interiors had been badly damaged by the elements and the building was demolished, despite community protests and independent reports stating that it was repairable.

6 This row of four Georgian terrace houses in Ashwin Street was the latest controversial demolition carried out by the Council in Dalston in 2010. The terrace was badly damaged by fire in 2008, in mysterious circumstances, and according to *Open Dalston*, was the ninth such 'opportunity site' to suffer this fate in four years. Before the fire, consultations with the council had led to an overwhelming majority of respondents stating a preference that the buildings be renovated and not demolished. The facades were shored up shortly after the fire, but not the rear walls. Consequently the condition of the properties became so dangerous they were demolished... the week before Boris Johnson was due to be the guest of honour at the Dalston Connected street party that took place in Ashwin Street on 6 June 2010.

book (14 x 18cm), and the graphic and typographic interventions within the pages and format engage with ideas of montage writing, temporality, multi-sensoriality, and interactivity in such a way as to offer the reader a three-dimensional space that demands physical engagement with a multi-linear narrative.

Freecycle

The *Freecycle* design test project (fig. 207) is the mid-point in relation to the notions of public and private, and macro to micro. Part of the worldwide Freecycle web network, the Hackney group is free to join, but one has to join to be able to offer or receive items, or to see what is wanted or offered. Here, 'stuff' is very much in circulation through Hackney, and rather than focusing on the enduring nature of home, Freecycle emphasises its transience. Hetherington (2004: 164) suggests that rather than using 'the rubbish bin as the archetypal conduit of disposal' the door is a better example, particularly as 'doors allow traffic in both directions' and therefore disposal is never final. This is certainly an apt description when considering the nature of Freecycle. Gregson (2007: 160) describes this act of disposal as 'ridding', suggesting that, along with 'acts of acquisition, holding, keeping and storing' it is 'critical to the practices of everyday life' and 'centrally implicated in the fabrication of homes'. With the help of Freecycle, although the items are no longer wanted or needed by one, they are offered and often taken by others. It is a process that becomes cyclical, and one that does not necessarily have an end—goods once received via Freecycle, can be offered again, when their new owner no longer has any use for them. Value resides in the eye of the beholder—it is a quality that is subjectively assessed by individuals, and doesn't naturally reside in objects (Gregson & Crewe, 2003: 112). However, unlike Gregson and Crewe's (2003) conclusions about the commercial second hand market—car boot sales, charity shops, and second hand shops—many Freecyclers are concerned about the 'implications of widespread purchasing' and reuse is 'a politicised practice'. The Hackney Freecycle members receive an 'etiquette' email on joining, which states

Our goal is to keep usable items out of the incinerator and landfill. By using what we already have, we reduce consumerism, manufacture fewer goods, and lessen the impact on the earth.
(personal email, 6 July, 2009)

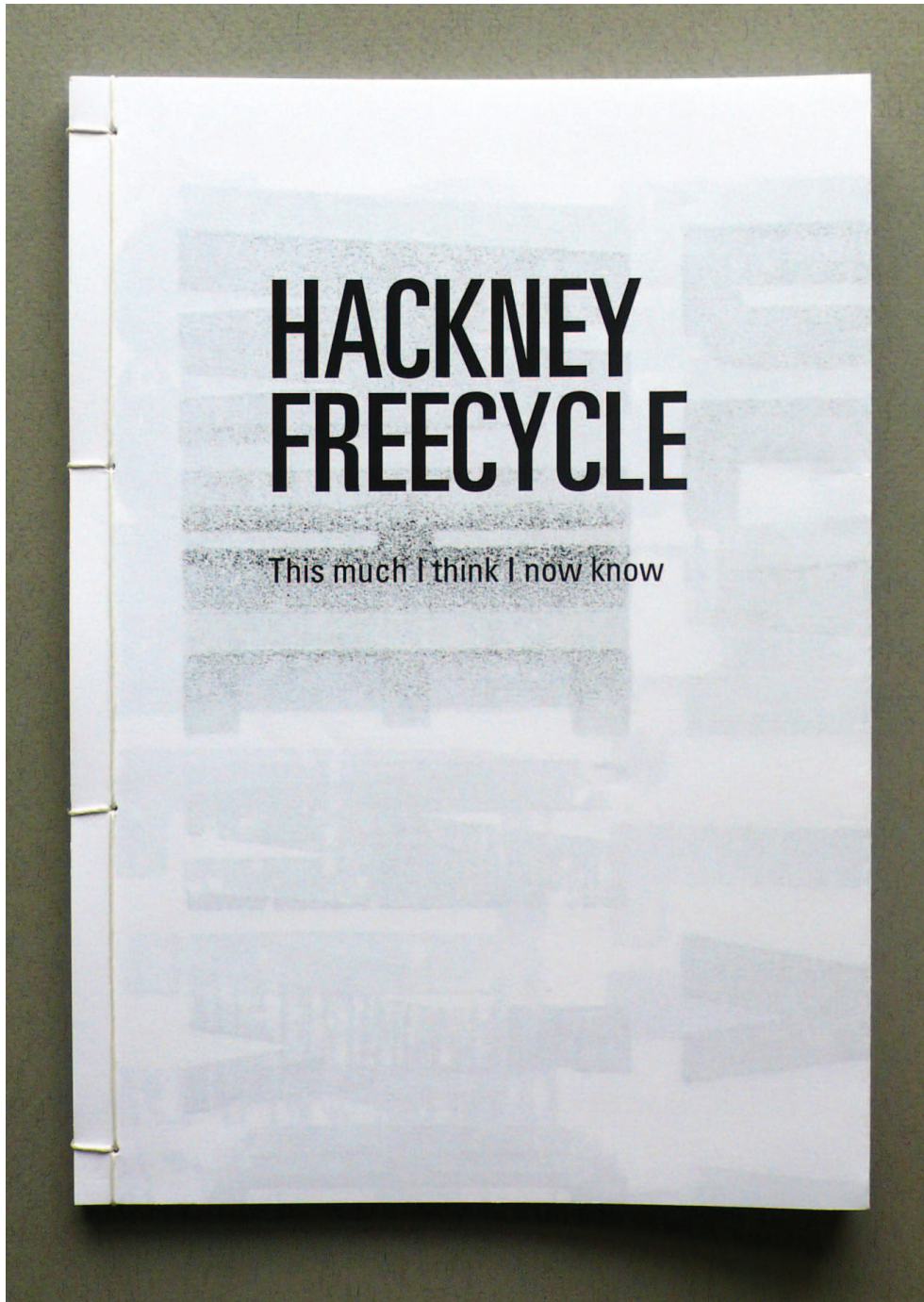


Fig. 207: **Freecycle**: cover

In her research into charity shops and car boot sales, Gregson found that such sites and spaces of second-hand exchange 'actually tell us very little about how and why things are divested and released' (Gregson 2007: 1). However, items offered on Freecycle retain the personal connection with the owner, and messages often give details of the story behind this 'releasing', for example:

Offered: Oral B toothbrush. Works generally OK and gives you super clean teeth, but the low battery indicator doesn't work so it has a tendency to just stop working. I bought a new one, so if anyone would like this before it heads for the bin, let me know. Thanks. (Hackney Freecycle, 16.10.09)

Offered: Three china wall ducks! These are white and can be painted. Wall mountings are attached. Received as ironic present, but we're not post-modern enough to carry it off... (Hackney Freecycle, 12.08.09)

The *Freecycle* book is developed from the analysis of messages such as these collected from the Hackney group over a six month period, from July to December 2009. The Hackney group is a particularly active one, so a member can receive two or three daily digest messages per day, each containing up to twenty five individual messages. Clearly, with six months of data equating to approximately ten thousand messages, I needed to extract a sample in order to make the data manageable for analysis. My method of sampling saw the selection of one week of data per month, starting on the second Sunday. Analysing data over a six month period brings a temporal aspect to the project, one which shows something of the ongoing 'process' of Freecycle and the circulation of stuff within Hackney, but by capturing it in a book it 'pauses' the process and enables it to be seen more clearly. The book (15 x 21cm) has been produced using paper that has been recycled, in keeping with its subject matter. Its full title 'Hackney Freecycle: This much I think I now know' refers to the fact that in this research, or in any other, one can never know or represent the 'whole' of something; the use of the pronoun 'I' also places the researcher at the centre of the work, acknowledging the inevitable subjectivity involved; and, the use of the word 'now' implies this is a mere moment in what is an ongoing process of both the Freecycle group and of Hackney.

Newsagents' windows

The final part of the Stuff trilogy, the *Newsagents' windows* design test project (fig. 208), is the most 'public' view of Hackney. The idea for this project was developed from the photographic recording of Hackney undertaken between 2008 and 2010. Having taken some photographs of advertisements in newsagents' windows in both Upper Clapton (E5) and Stoke Newington (N16) (figs. 209–210) I realised some of the content was dissimilar to each other in relation to the different postcodes—from 'massage' services in E5 to retro furniture or psychotherapy in N16. In a similar way to Freecycle, these advertisements reveal a circulation of stuff through Hackney, but here there is a greater focus on people and services—with many advertisements for rooms and flats to rent, alongside companies or individual tradespeople offering particular services. As with the *Freecycle* project, I needed to find a way of sampling the data as there are far too many newsagents within Hackney to include them all in the study.

Initially I made attempts to refine my approach that related to a geometrical approach to place—for example, defining the mathematical centre of the postcode areas within the borough on a map (fig. 211). These failed to generate a useful set of shops or advertisements for analysis; often I would arrive at the 'centre' I had defined to find it was, in reality, nothing of the sort. However, the analysis of this process, and in particular these failures enabled me to develop a clearer idea of what I was looking for—I needed to define this idea of a 'centre' not in geometric terms, but in relation to people and their interaction within place.

Ultimately, I identified the local Post Offices in the borough as all being situated in areas that had local shops nearby. All shop windows, not just newsagents, that contained advertisements were photographed within an approximate 75 metre distance of each Post Office. Unlike the *Freecycle* design test project, there is no temporal aspect to this work—the photographs were only taken once, so they recorded what was being advertised on that day only. It is a more fleeting, fragmentary view of Hackney that is less informed by sustained observation and ethnographic methods of researching place. However, in a similar way to the *Freecycle* design test project, taking these 'snapshots' enables a pausing of the

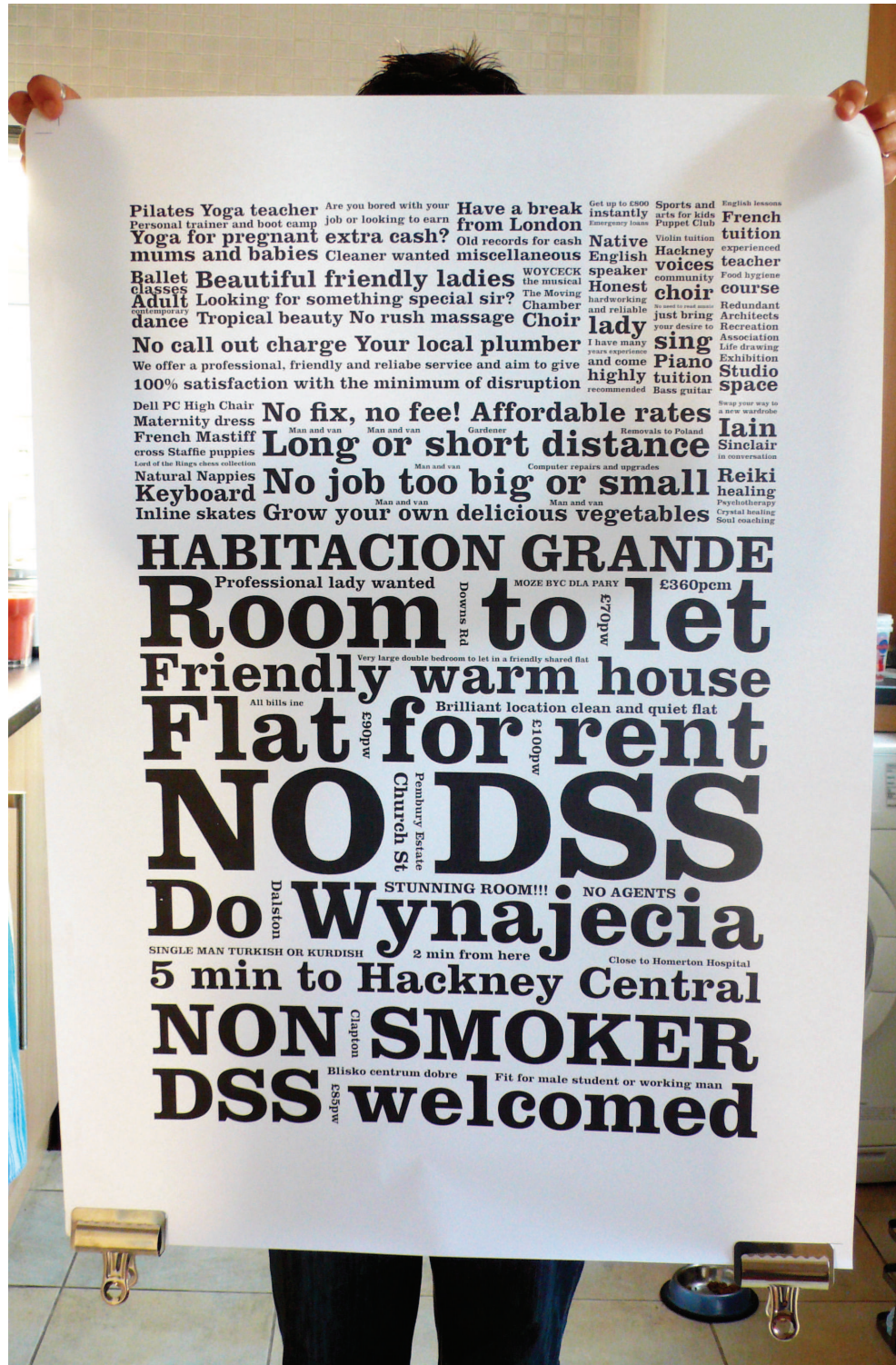


Fig. 208: Newsagents' windows: poster example

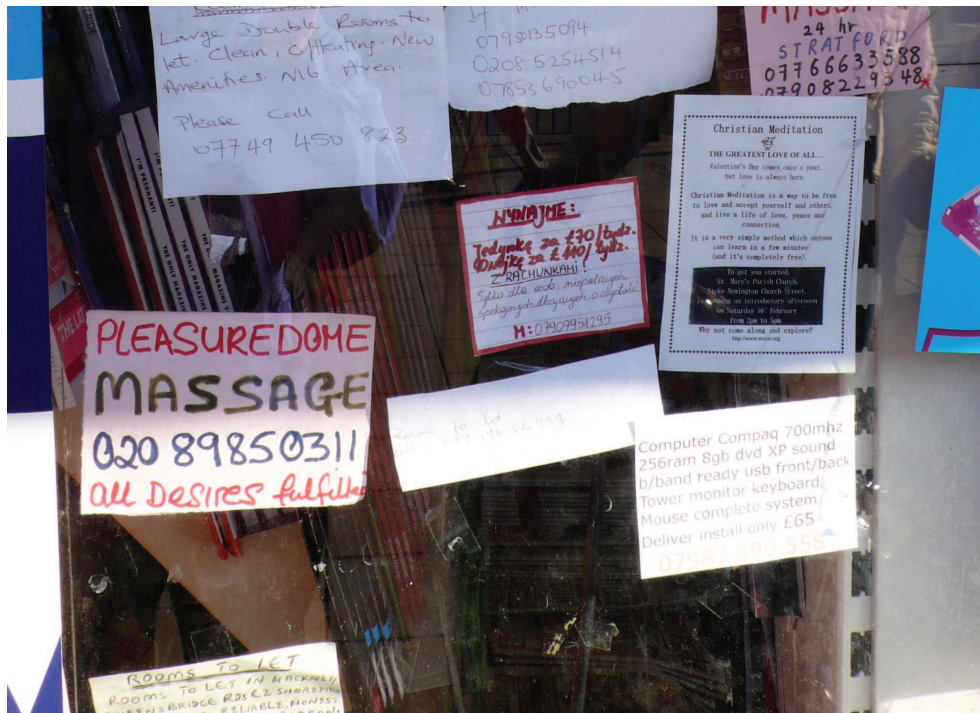


Fig. 209 Newsagent's window, Upper Clapton Road



Fig. 210 Newsagent's window, Stoke Newington Church Street



Fig. 211 Attempt to define **Newsagents' window** sample areas

ongoing process. The form of the final design also reflects this lack of temporality as the data is captured within a series of large individual A1 posters rather than a multi-page document.

Experimenting with Geography: See, hear, make and do

During the final year of my research I was offered an opportunity to participate in the week long, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded, *Experimenting with Geography: See, hear, make and do (EWG)* workshop, held in May 2010 at Edinburgh University. Organised by Michael Gallagher, a social researcher based at The University of Edinburgh, who also has a creative practice as an experimental musician and sound recordist, the workshop was developed in order to explore his theory that social research could benefit from the adoption of some of the techniques used within different types of creative practice. The workshop brought together a range of early career researchers and doctoral students, from both the social sciences and art and design. Although the majority of the participants were engaged in sound and video work, and therefore much of the focus of the week was on those areas, there was an experiential immediacy to many of the approaches and small workshops that inspired me to explore place in a different way.

The two books I produced from my stay in Edinburgh—*Old Town* and *A Haptic Journey* (figs. 212–213)—focus very much on the physical experience of walking in Edinburgh and my immediate sense of place. Literally being somewhere new enabled me to think again about a different type of response to place—one that wasn't built up over months of exploration or the long-term development of relationships with participants. The *Old Town* book was inspired by my experience of wandering through the wynds, closes and alleyways of Edinburgh Old Town, and the design explores the physicality of the book in relation to the physicality of place. The book (13.5 x 18.5cm) uses the graphic spaces of a facsimile edition of an engraved 1765 map of the Old Town to recreate the physical spaces of light and dark that I experienced as I wandered. Texts relating to characters, building and events from the 18th and 19th century are interspersed within the folds of the pages, adding a sense of the past to the immediate experience of the present. *A Haptic Journey* reflects my fascination with the solidity and texture of the stone that Edinburgh is built on and with. The book (16 x 14cm) contains reproductions of a series of rubbings of a variety

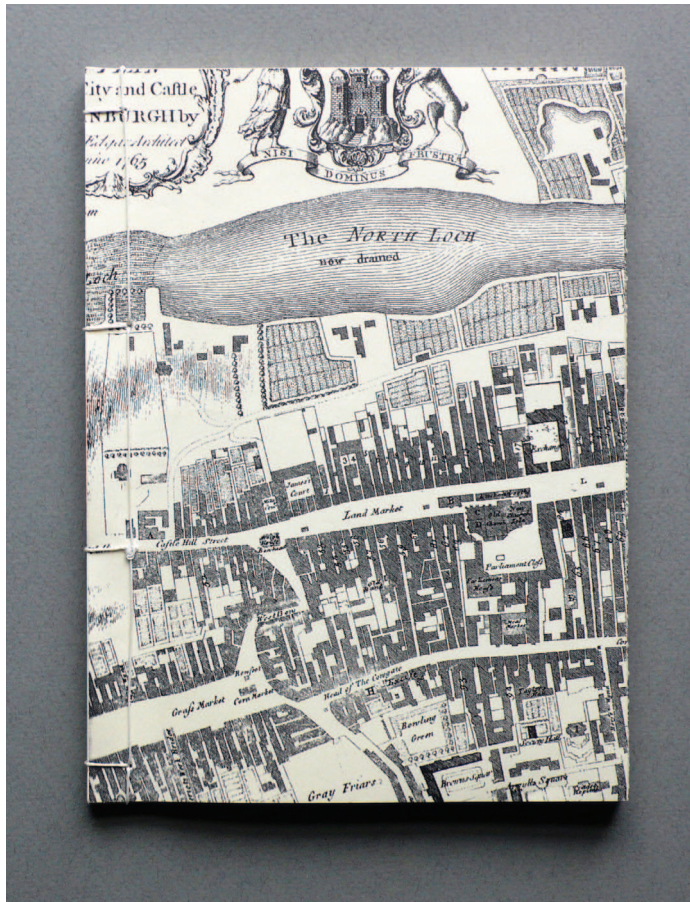


Fig. 212: EWG **Old Town**: front cover

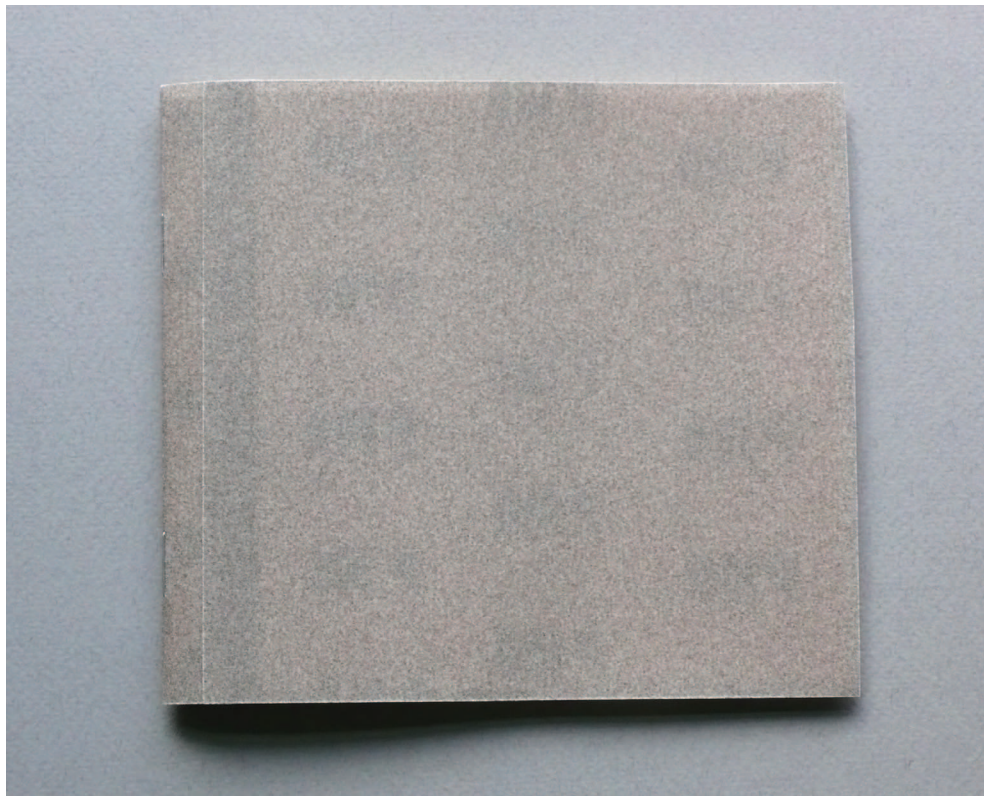


Fig. 213: EWG **A Haptic Journey**: front cover

of natural and man-made surfaces undertaken whilst walking through Edinburgh. Both books reflect Calvino's (1997: 10–11) description of a city.

The city... does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightening rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.

Food Miles: A journey from Kingsland Road to Stamford Hill

Food Miles, the final design test project (fig. 214) developed out of a desire to more clearly engage with something of Hackney's diversity and multi-cultural make-up. I identified the old Roman Road, the A10, which stretches from Kingsland Road at the southern tip of Hackney, to Stamford Hill at the northern-most, as something of a 'spine' of the borough. It is a stretch of road that offers multi-sensory evidence of Hackney's diverse population—from the pocket of Vietnamese restaurants at the bottom of Kingsland Road, through the Turkish community in Dalston and Stoke Newington, up to the Jewish shops at Stamford Hill. Whilst mapping the street, and recording images of interest, I became acutely aware of just how many of the commercial premises are restaurants or grocery shops, with the majority quite clearly defined in the type of cuisine or products they sell. Food is clearly an important part of maintaining one's identity, particularly amongst diasporic communities (Blunt & Dowling 2006: 212). The Centre for Migration and Diaspora Studies (2009), suggest that, for some migrants, food and drink have a central role in maintaining kin, social and cultural ties brought from other places; to build new groups on shared cultural or social identity, but also to define and create divisions between immigrants themselves and other migrants or 'host' groups. In this way, food becomes what we might call an 'identity marker'.

Interspersed within the reasonably clearly demarcated Turkish, Vietnamese and Jewish gastronomic territories is the usual raft of Chinese takeaways, fried chicken joints, greasy spoons, curry houses, and the ubiquitous Irish pub. However, there are also other countries and cultures represented along this three mile stretch of road, for example, Ethiopian, Polish, West Indian, and Brazilian. Some of these communities have been established in the area for decades, sometimes arriving as refugees following political unrest in their own countries, or sometimes

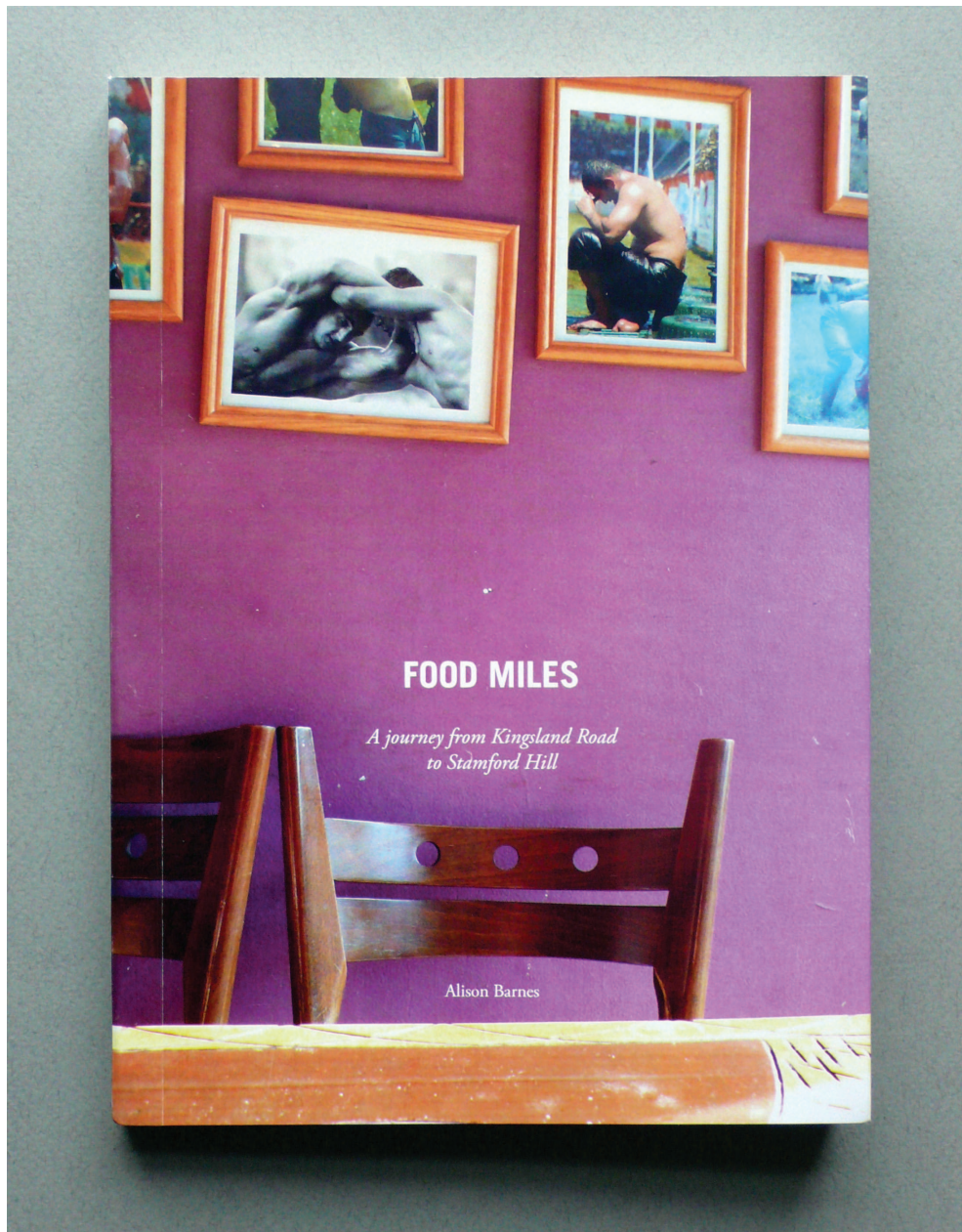


Fig. 214: **Food Miles**: front cover

through labour migration due to economic downturns in their country of birth. During this time, to a greater or lesser degree, they have established communities within Hackney, of which, the food shops, cafés and restaurants provide not only a focal point in some cases, but also a visible reminder of the diversity of the borough.

However, if one is to really experience these establishments, one needs to get beyond the visual. To engage with a fuller experiential exploration of these three miles, one needs to eat and drink, and then eat and drink some more. In the three miles between the beginning of Kingsland Road and the junction at Stamford Hill, there are over 150 eating and drinking establishments, as well as countless grocery shops, so I sampled a range that included all the different communities that are represented. As some communities are more established than others, they have developed a larger infrastructure within Hackney, and therefore have a greater number of restaurants and shops. The Turkish cafés and restaurants, for example, numbered over thirty. I therefore chose to visit these larger communities more than once, both to experience a range of different dishes and types of establishment. The only other enforced constraint was my vegetarianism. This meant I was unable to eat some dishes that could be said to be traditional, like Caribbean jerk chicken or Turkish tripe soup, but I was always able to find something that I was able to eat or drink.

My method was essentially that of the ethnographer, visiting restaurants, notebook, pen and camera in hand, recording my experience of the surroundings, the food and drink, and my interaction with staff or fellow diners. As I undertook my journey I learnt about the diversity of Hackney, and about myself and my own culture, as it, and I, were often sharply reflected in difference—from race, religion and gender, through to music, strange tasting drinks and unusual breakfasts. The visual outcome of the design test project is a book (15 x 21cm) that reflects this complex, global yet local reading of place by embedding related passages of text inspired by the experiences of eating. The design interventions used within the format of the book once again explore strategies of montage writing and offer the reader an interactive, spatial experience, that allows both a local and global reading of place.

So, although the above design test projects have varied contexts and subject matter, the central aim of them all was to develop the notion of a geo/graphic design process. Whilst undertaking the separate design

test projects it became clear, that there were many interrelated aspects between them, hence the following three chapters are not written chronologically, project by project, but in relation to the stages undertaken through the process of a practice-led research project, or the stages through which one would carry out a project utilising the geo/graphic design process—from one's first engagement with place itself, through to an analysis of form and content, leading to the visual execution developed from these first two stages. This approach enables a sustained analysis of each of the stages that evidences the key themes discovered, which in turn will be used to develop the final articulation of the geo/graphic design process. However, this structure may be a somewhat artificial sequence as the design process is often portrayed as a cycle or a spiral like form that enables the practice to progress through various iterations, and a form that offers a recursive flexibility to revisit previous ideas in the light of new discoveries. Each step of the process cannot, therefore, really be taken in isolation, so in this case the chapters should simply be taken as a useful structural aid to the thesis. The following chapter, the first of the three, draws together the range of methods that have been undertaken during the course of this research, in order to develop an understanding of the London borough of Hackney, and analyses their impact in relation to the development of the geo/graphic design process.

6

The place of research: Researching place

Place can be seen as ‘a sphere of dynamic simultaneity’ (Massey 2005: 107) and this practice-led research has found that not only is it possible to research and experience place in a multitude of ways, it is also preferable (Armin & Thrift, 2002: 14, Pink 2009: 47). The following chapter discusses these research methods, beginning with my initial approach to place, which was undertaken simply through walking; and, charting the development of this method into a more experiential, immediate exploration of place. The discussion then focuses on the place of the geo/graphic researcher within this explorative, participatory process, and engages with issues of subjectivity and power. This is followed by the articulation of methods that engaged participants other than the researcher, and concludes with a short section discussing the potential of traditional documentary and secondary research, both as a sole approach, and in conjunction with some of the more experiential approaches. Indeed, many of the design test projects engaged several methods either at once, or throughout their course, in an attempt to build a richer, intertextual picture of the particular aspect(s) of place I was dealing with. But first, as Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu so aptly said, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step...

6.1 Walking place

Much has been written about walking as a method for exploring place, both in geography and in the creative arts (for example, Pinder 2005, Pile 2002, Pink et al 2010). Yet, whilst reading about such a method is informative, it remains dormant—simply a theoretical proposition—until one actually gets up from one’s desk and takes to the streets. As Perkins (2006: np) has suggested, an engagement with the world is necessary if one wants to represent it. My initial research into Hackney was therefore undertaken through walking, and I spent several hours at a time exploring street after street, area after area. At this point I had no specific focus, I was walking not just to explore Hackney physically and spatially, but I was also using the process of walking as a way of gathering my thoughts and ideas. I found the speed of walking (or lack of it) makes it a productive way of experiencing and thinking about place. In an attempt to cover more ground I did try to spend a day researching Hackney by bicycle; it was hopeless, not to mention dangerous. I was either travelling too fast to really take in my surroundings, or I was stopping so often to look more carefully at

something that I became a danger to those who may have been cycling or driving behind me. As Tilley (2004: 223) says,

Understanding place is a gradual process of familiarisation in which description is ultimately the last act... It takes time and cannot be hurried... One needs to explore first before recording anything.

When one is walking, one has time not only to look around, but also to think about what one is seeing and develop ideas. There is little else to concentrate on, no wing mirrors to look in, and no brakes to apply, just the occasional turn of the head from side to side if one is crossing the road or sees something of interest. It is a fertile space, away from the desk, and if one is contemplating place, then why not do that *in* place itself. Other than attempting to cover the majority of Hackney over the course of the research, I applied no specific method to the trajectory of my walking. Unlike some of the tactics employed by the Situationists that involved exploring one area by following a map from another, I simply allowed myself to be guided by what interested me. This could be said to follow Wolfinger's (2002: 89) strategy of a 'salience hierarchy'.

The combination of both physical and mental space offered by the act of walking allowed me time for analysis and reflection in relation to Hackney, and my experience of it. In some cases these reflections led either directly or indirectly to the development of the design test projects, for example, *Newsagents' windows*, *Hackney conversations* and *Food Miles*. So it would seem this simple research method offers not just an opportunity to build up a practical, spatial knowledge of an area, but that its position within the 'field' and its slow pace also offer secondary benefits in terms of the ongoing geo/graphic processes of analysis, reflection, evaluation and idea generation. However, the slow pace that enables the processes of analysis and reflection doesn't necessarily preclude a way of engaging with place that enables swift, more instinctive analyses to be undertaken.

6.2 Experiencing place

Through my engagement with the *EWG* workshop I began to think about the potential residing in a more 'immediate' experience of place. As a designer I have always been taught to research the brief thoroughly in a relatively traditional way, and to develop a range of ideas that are capable

of being defended or reinforced by that research. In Edinburgh I was surrounded by sound, video and performance artists, and one in particular who was running drumsticks along railings just to see what it sounded like, jumping onto a bike to film themselves cycling to a derelict Wild West town south of the city, and recording howling dogs to create a canine reworking of Ennio Morricone's spaghetti Western soundtrack. Being literally out of my usual place, and surrounded by people working in a different way enabled me to shift my thinking and approach slightly. This approach, primarily using walking again, perhaps wasn't as extreme as those listed above, but it became both more hands on and, paradoxically, a way of letting go more. This is not to suggest that I was somehow sitting on the fence, neither adopting a hands on nor a hands off approach. Rather, it was a realisation that I could complement what might be considered normative graphic design research strategies with more immediate, experiential understandings of place.

Only in Edinburgh for a week I had both a limited time to explore place and to develop ideas from which to develop some design test projects. It was a place I had visited once before, but not for many years, so I was coming to it without many preconceptions. From the moment I arrived at Waverley Station I was struck by the solidity of the city. It seemed to be literally hewn from the rock. From the imposing figure of the castle, to the refined Georgian terraces of New Town, the stone facades face the elements, silently seeing out season after season, year after year. I found myself running my hands across the stone as I walked, feeling textures made by nature and by stone carvers. The city seemed to heighten my haptic perception, and I began to take simple rubbings of surfaces as I explored the city. This process retained a sense of connection between the hand, the paper and the stone. Had I photographed these sites there would have been a physical separation—a barrier between person and place negating our multi-sensory experience of the world. Many of the images I recorded were of traditional materials, but others were more contemporary. The more I walked, the more I saw, and the more I touched. This journey is retold through the pages of a small book—*Edinburgh: A Haptic Journey*—and what was particularly interesting for me was the shift in my method and approach to a more immediate way of seeing and producing.

I was also fascinated by the alleyways—or to give them their proper names, closes, wynds and courts—of the Old Town. Along the Royal Mile,

with the Castle at one end and Holyrood Palace at the other, a series of narrow alleyways lead off it in a disorienting, herringbone-like pattern. The closes and wynds are, in some places, no more than a few feet wide—the Old Town of Edinburgh retains its medieval layout. As one walks along the Royal Mile, the entrances of the alleyways beckon the visitor in, giving glimpses of small courtyards or steps that suddenly transport one, as if by a magical shortcut, to a lower part of town. Exploring these alleyways one constantly moves from dark to light and back again—from being enclosed by walls and a low roof, to standing under the open sky within a courtyard. The history seems tangible within the walls themselves, but is also overtly recorded in a series of plaques relating to names such as Fleshmarket Close or Old Stamp Office Close, and residents of note. It was these physical experiences of this disorienting place that I wanted to somehow engage with and communicate in my practice. The design interventions taken to achieve this, and those undertaken within *A Haptic Journey* will be discussed in specific detail in chapter eight.

Both of these small projects derive, in a sense, from a ‘gut instinct’ of Edinburgh. There was no in-depth research, no interviews, and limited exploration of a wider context. It was, and to an extent remains, an immediate response to my surroundings and my experience of them. This is not how I usually work—other design test projects tell more peopled stories of place, utilise diverse types of content, and develop more obviously complex narratives. However, these are built over time, and often with participants, but I was in Edinburgh for one week only. This time frame effectively became a parameter that led to a productive exploration of the value of improvisation, immediacy and experience within the context of the act of walking.

At the point I returned from Edinburgh I only had one more design test project to complete before finishing the practice, and it is clear to me that my experience there, and the work produced from it, informed this final project. *Food Miles*, although ultimately a complex, intertextual weaving of different types of information, has its roots in an experiential, experimental exploration of place. To experience Hackney through the food of its diverse cultures brings a multi-sensory approach to the research. Tilley, drawing on phenomenological thinking, suggests that ‘the body is the medium through which we know place’ (2004: 25), and that ‘such experience is always synaesthetic’ (2004: 221). Whereas up till now I had predominantly

focused on sight and sound in my approaches—with touch explored in one of the Edinburgh books—through taste and smell I was now bringing my full range of senses to the exploration of place. It was smell that drew me to the idea for the design test project in the first place, for it is what I noticed most as I walked along the road charting the different commercial premises. It can be a powerful, sensory way of experiencing place as Zawieja (2010: 141) captures in her description of Mare Street, Hackney.

Mare Street cuts through East London like a diagram. In a straight line from north to south one smell follows another. Fried chicken, sweet potatoes, salt fish pie, banana cake. Spring rolls, lemon grass, soy sauce, fish sauce. Cumin, ginger, dal, coriander, cinnamon, saffron. Lamb, yoghurt, sesame, mint, hummus, thyme.

Through this research I was literally ingesting and digesting place, and whilst the eventual design piece did not solely represent this physical exploration, as the *EWG Old Town* book did, this new, more immediate, bodily approach clearly informed my thinking and the development of the idea. It is highly likely that my specialism as a print designer also played a subconscious part in these sensorial developments. Paper and ink can be touched and smelt, and often one finds print designers instinctively running their fingers over a paper to feel its texture, or sniffing the ink-perfumed pages of a litho printed book. This aspect of print eludes screen based media. The contribution such materials can make to the reader's experience is discussed in *The place of materials and production*, section three, chapter eight, in relation to proactive graphic and typographic interventions made during the execution of the design test projects.

These approaches place the researcher firmly, and overtly, particularly in the case of *Food Miles*, at the centre of the process and its end products. I became acutely aware of this during the fieldwork phase of the *Food Miles* test project. The research became about my choices, my experiences, and my thoughts; for example, the text in *Food Miles* is either written directly from my perspective, or has been inspired by my experience. So, is there a danger of self-indulgence in these methods themselves—initially my walking rarely employed a strategy other than turning a corner because I was interested to see what might be there; and, is there a danger that the work developed from such methods could also be accused of being self-indulgent as the design test projects were all developed out of my response to place, probes or participants?

6.3 The place of the researcher

Whatever research methods one chooses to engage with, the researcher is always present, in both the ‘experiments’ and therefore the ‘data’. These issues—in particular those of subjectivity and power—relate to any type of qualitative or quantitative research. For traditional social scientists this issue of subjectivity seems a particularly difficult one. However, as a designer, certain aspects of the role perhaps make this an easier proposition. Designers are used to taking on a role that encompasses both editing and interpretation (and this will be discussed further in chapters seven and eight, specifically in relation to writing and design), and with this role naturally comes an opportunity to shape meaning—it is simply part of the job. Designers also consider the audience as part of their process, employing rhetoric or style deliberately because of its communicative potential. Within traditional cultural geographic research there is perhaps sometimes a mistaken sense that academic texts—compared to the creative writing that Brace & Johns-Putra (2010) or Lorimer (2008) refer to—are constructed with no style, rather than the style of the academy.

In a sense, in this interdisciplinary research, I am embracing *subjectivity* with an emphasis on the subject specific approach of graphic design, and my knowledge and understanding of the communicative potential that resides in consciously constructed graphic and typographic interventions made in relation to content. Also, since the debates around the issue of the ‘designer as author’, self-generated work undertaken outside of the traditional designer-client relationship, has flourished. Now, whilst there are clearly similarities here with the role of the academic writer or ethnographer, I think another element that enables the designer to undertake this role without worrying about subjectivity, is that much of their work is undertaken within the commercial world, rather than the academic, and is therefore not subjected to the same ontological and epistemological scrutiny. So designers are left relatively free to reflect on the communicative potential in their work in a different way, perhaps one that is rooted in pragmatic, common sense, rather than one that is informed by postmodern, epistemological concerns. For example, when reflecting on this issue of subjectivity, the questions I felt I needed to ask of myself were:

Is this interesting to others?

Does this communicate some kind of believable experience?

What can someone learn about Hackney through this?

Since 'truth' has been found to be just another perspective, and such stories a way in which the world is 'constructed, understood and acted out' (Cook & Crang 2007: 14), perhaps these types of questions are a useful way of engaging with issues of subjectivity in this instance.

The *Food Miles* fieldwork also raised other issues about my place in the process. Occasionally I became conscious of the artifice of the research situation, which seemed to slightly conflict with eating, as it is to some extent a natural, biological need. I was also often very aware of my own background highlighted in and against particular research settings. At times I could use this in a productive way, for example, being able to use shared interests as a way of instigating conversation, such as the discussion about football in the Brazilian café. At others, particularly around gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, I often felt my own perceived difference sharply reflected in my surroundings. There may have been a danger that my research could have been likened to 'cultural food colonialism' (Heldke 2008: 328), and there could have been issues of power to address around notions of food and 'the Other', or 'the exotic' (hooks 1992). However, I entered into the research with a desire to engage with my experience in a non-judgemental way. Not that this removes the problems of a potential power dynamic, but an awareness of it, coupled with an openness to learn, must go some way to removing it as an issue.

I think my gender also often afforded something of a shift in this dynamic. Many of the places I visited, where a 'cultural food colonialism' accusation could have been likely, I found the tables were somehow turned. Although I may have been the only white, western customer at the curry stall in Ridley Road Market, or the Ethiopian internet café, I was also the only woman. This, more often than not, made me feel like 'the Other'. As a woman eating or drinking alone this experience was often repeated more generally throughout the research, and in slightly different ways around issues of sexuality and religious belief, in both the Caribbean restaurant and the Jewish shops. Much as these experiences often made me feel quite uncomfortable, and brought up issues around notions of 'belonging', I was

able to record these in my field notes and then use them productively in order to learn about history, customs or cultures that I was unfamiliar with, and then bring my new understanding into the *Food Miles* book as part of its content.

So, although subjectivity and power are almost ever present through this research journey, and any other, the first step to working with these issues is an acknowledgement and understanding of this. To undertake the research from a standpoint of openness and a willingness to learn, and to accept that one is ‘telling a story’ from one’s own perspective. However, to ensure this perspective refrains from degenerating into ‘navel-gazing’, critical questions can be asked:

Does this work enable us to understand something about place?

Is this work interesting and does it inspire engagement with it?

Is this work believable?

However, although these questions offer some sort of ‘validation’ or ‘crystallisation’ process, different perspectives can also be sought during the research through methods that engage participants other than the researcher themselves.

6.4 Participating in place

From the outset of the research I was clear that I not only wanted to engage with place, but also with people whose lives are part of the ongoing social construction that is Hackney. This was not a search to arrive at the ‘truth’ about the borough from residents, but simply to give the research a range of perspectives from which to develop an understanding of Hackney, and generate the design test projects. The cultural probe packs offered one way of doing this, though because of the task type of format, executed by participants in their own time, it was a method that didn’t actually offer much sustained contact with people, aside from the meetings to deliver and collect the pack. Gaver et al (2004) have criticised those researchers who have then developed more sustained contact with participants, via interviews for example, seeing it as destroying the idea of the probes functioning as inspiration rather than information—and I will discuss this

further in the following chapter in relation to analysis. However, I felt—particularly with three participants who had answered the question about home in a way that I found engaging and inspiring—that not to discuss their returns further would actually restrict the potential of the *Stuff* design test project.

With any type of participation in research, the participant plays a role in developing the study, and to that end could potentially be said to be a co-researcher. This is perhaps even more evident in this case with participants providing photographs and texts that could be seen to be content used within the design test projects—their role here perhaps touches on that of a co-designer. The participants were also given a basic outline of the research as part of the process of gaining consent and this knowledge, alongside their role in the completion of the probes led many to develop an interest in the progress of the research and offer further assistance. The development of the *Stuff* project was a case in point. In answer to the question ‘What makes your house a home?’ in the cultural probe pack, one participant wrote the following:

All my ‘Stuff’ I suppose, of which there is a great deal. Never one to do anything by halves and having taken up many projects (most unfinished), Stuff has proliferated to a great extent, all considered as ‘stocks’ that could and would be used at some time or other. These include beads, fabrics, wool and artists’ materials. What will my children do with all of it when I peg out? (CL, 2009).

Inspired by this particular response, I contacted the author to see if they would be willing to talk about this ‘stuff’ further with me. Not only was the participant willing, but a few days later I also found an unsolicited five-page Word document in my inbox entitled ‘The stuff of dreams’—essentially a life story charted through the participant’s various collections and craft interests. This in turn inspired me to write a more academic response to the subject, in the form of an essay, as a contrast to such a personal narrative. We then continued our contact with a wide ranging, unstructured conversation about the ‘stuff’, that took place at the participant’s house, prompted by the life story and the sight of much of the ‘stuff’ on shelves and dressers. The participant also allowed me to photograph many of the items that were referred to in both our conversation and the text. Following successful follow up contact with this participant, two others, whose completed packs had included

interesting answers to the same question, were contacted. They also agreed to share memories of particular items and allow me to take photographs. This extended and personal contact with these participants enabled a particularly appropriate perspective to be developed and re/presented through the *Stuff* test project, as it was intended as a close up, personal view of Hackney. My experience of this contravention of the original method, therefore, is that it certainly did not diminish the cultural probes in anyway and certainly did enrich my research.

Towards the end of my second year of research I was offered an opportunity to develop some work to be shown at *Pattern Making For Beginners (PMFB)* at the *Hackney Wicked* Festival in August 2009. The aim of *PMFB* was to develop work that would engage with visitors to the exhibition in such a way as to gain information about their relationships with Hackney. I had recently completed the *Type Cast* test project that dealt with the language of the media, and the *Death of the Author* test project which showed language is deliberately chosen and constructed in such a way as to dramatise and to stereotype—essentially to sell papers. This ‘place-image’ of Hackney is then peddled far beyond its borders and the sales area of *The Hackney Gazette* and into the national media. However, closer to home, is this an image that is unrecognisable, or is this the language that other people would use to describe the borough?

In order to explore the perceptions of visitors⁷ to the exhibition in relation to Hackney I first developed a simple map, using the outline of Hackney, on a sheet of A0 paper. This was pinned to the wall and in front of it was a table with four woodblock alphabets of various sizes and types, printing pads, and cards, on which people were invited to write their description of Hackney. I then printed their comments onto the map using the woodblock type they had chosen. I chose to do this myself simply because of the fragile nature of the type and its value. The ‘market stall’ type of set up was deliberate as I wanted to get people interested in the ‘wares’ I had laid out, and be able position myself in front of visitors, but with a comforting barrier between us, so as to engage them in conversation and encourage them to take part. The set up functioned well and many people commented on how beautiful the letters were as things themselves. I found myself

7 Visitors to the exhibition were predominantly from the Hackney area, but those who lived outside the borough were welcome to engage with the map if they had an experience or perception of Hackney they wanted to share.

talking to participants and printing almost solidly for the six hours of the exhibition. By the end of the day the map had literally become a landscape of text (figs. 215–217). People's responses ranged from the personal to the political, but the majority of the responses, unlike those of the *Hackney Gazette*, were of a positive nature.

What underpins the success of both of these participatory methods are communication skills. Denzin & Lincoln's (1994, 2000, 2005) discussion of the bricoleur centres on his or her ability to adapt and develop a variety of theoretical methodological approaches. However, in this participative phase of the research I feel that the key type of adaptability is that which enables one to talk to very different types of people in a variety of situations; to be able to build relationships and trust with participants so that they feel comfortable in contributing their stories, or simply gain 'entry' to, or even reveal, situations that may not have been accessible or obvious initially.

I had a further opportunity to reprise the *Type Cast* map during the week long *In/flux* exhibition in September 2009. As I would be unable to facilitate the printing process for the whole week, I simplified the idea. Once again an A0 sized map of Hackney was pinned to the gallery wall, but this time I simply mounted a pencil, pencil sharpener, and instructions next to it. The *In/flux* map thus handed far more control to the participants and this is immediately evident in the way participants have subtly, or otherwise, subverted the instructions; statements appear out of the borders of Hackney; drawings have been added; conversations/disagreements have been undertaken in writing; and, paragraphs of text have been written rather than single word descriptions (figs. 218–220). These are perhaps interventions that wouldn't have happened had I been perceived to be 'standing guard' by the map. So not only does the bricoleur have to be adaptable, they also have to respect that participants may adapt their methods in ways they hadn't foreseen.

Throughout these sections there is perhaps a thread subtly appearing that is about 'letting go'. Not just in terms of relinquishing control over the participants' interpretation of one's research methods, but also in one's own research journey. To have no preconceived idea of destination, or perhaps in research terms, no hypothesis, might be seen in some more positivist circles as foolish, but in this research it has been entirely productive. To open myself up to exploring places without knowing where



Fig. 215: **Type Cast map** at PMFB: set up and participation



Fig. 216: **Type Cast map** at PMFB: printing process



Fig. 217: **Type Cast map** at PMFB: final map

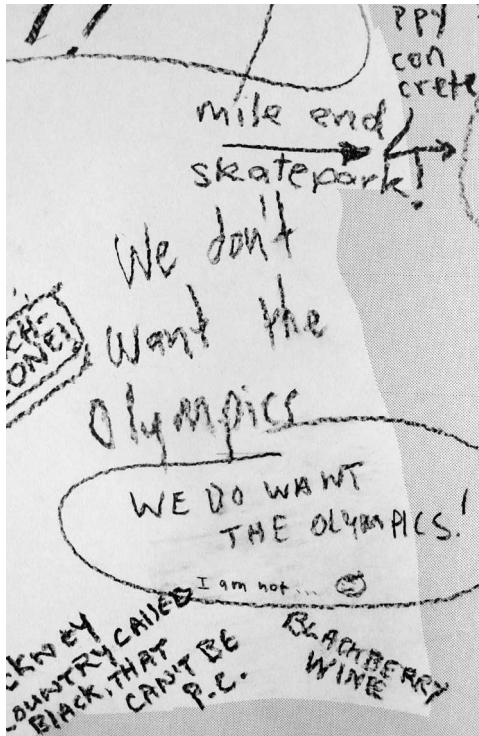


Fig. 218: **Type Cast map** at In/flux: detail

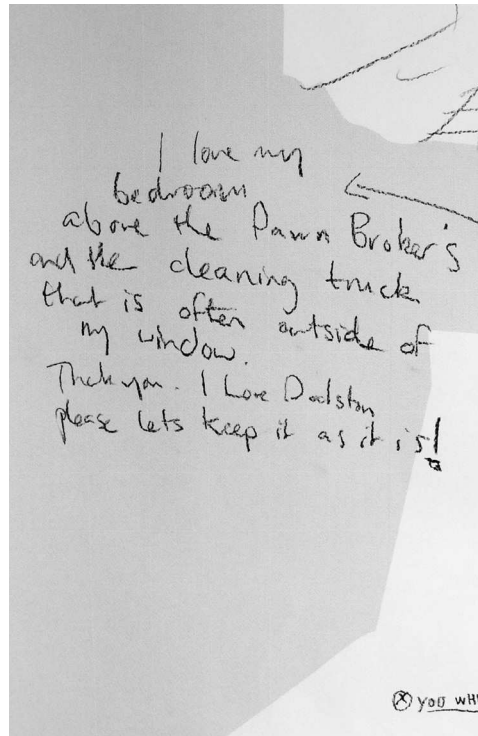


Fig. 219: **Type Cast map** at In/flux: detail

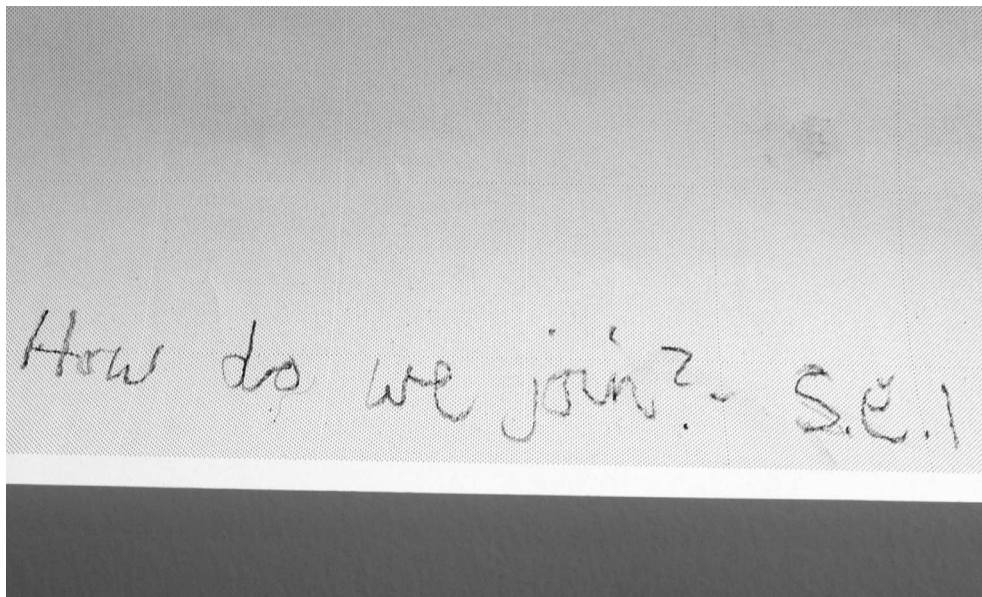


Fig. 220: **Type Cast map** at In/flux: detail

I might be going, to make rubbings instinctively without questioning 'why', to engage in unstructured, open-ended, often unplanned, conversations, has taken me on a journey that I could not have anticipated. It brings to mind the flâneurie or dérives of the Surrealists and the Situationists, and several of Bruce Mau's (1998) statements from his *Incomplete Manifesto for Growth*,

Allow events to change you

You have to be willing to grow. Growth is different from something that happens to you. You produce it. You live it. The prerequisites for growth: the openness to experience events and the willingness to be changed by them.

Process is more important than outcome

When the outcome drives the process we will only ever go to where we've already been. If process drives outcome we may not know where we're going, but we will know we want to be there.

Drift

Allow yourself to wander aimlessly. Explore adjacencies. Lack judgment. Postpone criticism.

Engaging in this way with regard to place also seems appropriate, as it is always ongoing, always undetermined and unfinished (Massey 2005), therefore, there is no one 'truth' to establish. Perhaps this way of thinking and this approach also aligns with the original rationale behind the probes, that the lack of white coat, clipboard and questionnaire lead to a more open dialogue with participants, and the sense that inspiration is more productive in terms of generating ideas than information. However, other perspectives can still complement these experiential, and open participatory methods further, and much of this geo/graphic research into place has been directed and complemented by more traditional, text-based research methods.

6.5 Reading place

Documentary research was undertaken throughout the process of the research, analysis and design. At times this was to complement the more experimental strategies, at others it was the sole method of data gathering. For example, the *Type Cast* test project, inspired by theoretical reading about place, was developed by analysing two years' worth of *Hackney Gazette* headlines from the archives in Hackney Library. Other test projects

drew on both types of research practices, particularly *Stuff* and *Food Miles*. *Stuff* includes an academic essay that framed participants' references to collecting and stockpiling; and, *Food Miles* includes a range of other texts that give factual and contextual information as well as more academic insights into related subjects that arose during the research process. Here, this type of research enriches both test projects, enabling them to develop into multi-faceted, intertextual re/presentations of place. Even amongst the experimental and experiential research there is, and I would argue needs to be, room for the traditional. To produce work that is inspired by, and solely resides in, the experiential domain simply privileges one type of work over another, and misses out on a rich body of material that can both inspire and develop one's understanding in relation to place. For example, the *EWG Old Town* book offers an experiential, physical exploration of a sense of that particular place, but also reveals texts that ground this experience in a historical context.

My sense is that this holistic approach offers work that engages both mind and body directly, offering something to the debates about non-representational theory (Thrift 1996), and addressing the perceived divide between theory and practice (Nash 2000). In fact, throughout this practice-led research, the integration of theory and practice has been critical at every stage. Integral to the development of a geo/graphic design process was an understanding of place. This was achieved not only through the practice of physical exploration, but also through secondary theoretical research, through exploring texts by Massey (1994, 2005), Tuan (1977) and Cresswell (2004), for example. These texts enabled me to refine my understanding of place and develop a set of parameters within which I was able to generate further research and ideas about place through the test projects. My sense is that to attempt to engage in interdisciplinary work of a geo/graphic nature, without engaging in theory, would leave the practice somewhat directionless and one-dimensional.

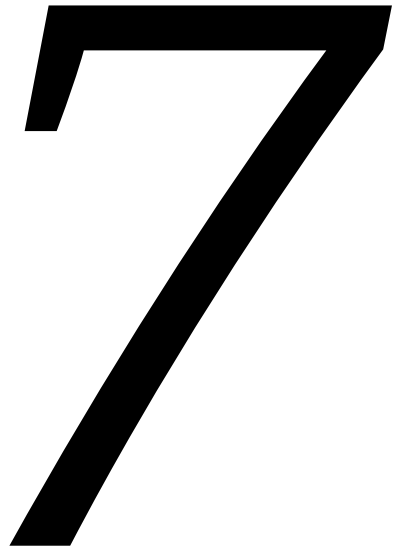
6.6 Conclusion

The overarching message of this chapter, therefore, is that in order to develop a broad understanding of place one must use a range of research methods. Through literally being in place, one can use walking as a way of slowing down and undertaking analysis and reflection. However, walking also offers the opportunity to 'follow one's nose', to improvise, and to think through place via all one's senses in a more experiential,

immediate way. These processes place the researcher at the centre of the work and one needs to acknowledge, understand and accept that issues such as subjectivity and power will inevitably enter this process. Indeed, in this interdisciplinary work my role as a graphic designer, and my subject knowledge, is used in a consciously productive, *subjective* way, throughout all aspects of the research, but in particular in the graphic and typographic interventions made within the design test projects. However, in order to ensure the research resists a self-indulgent subjectivity and produces relevant results, critical questions must be asked in relation to the contribution the research makes with regard to our understanding of place; the level of interest it may provoke within its intended reader; and, its credibility.

Not only should one research place in a variety of ways, but one should also seek a variety of perspectives through these methods. In undertaking participatory research methods communication can be central to building trust and developing fruitful relationships with participants, as can the adoption of methods that are non-traditional. Participation through the execution of creative tasks perhaps encourages a productive relationship with participants, as this type of engagement with research seems to lead to a sense of 'ownership' or perhaps even the adoption of a 'co-researcher role'. During the selection and development of these strategies one should not be afraid of knowingly adapting methods in relation to unfolding circumstances and opportunities. One should also be ready to accept and expect the unexpected when engaging participants in creative tasks. Finally, one should never ignore traditional methods of research. They can be used to underpin, complement, or contrast more immediate, experiential understandings of place and enable the development of work that utilises a productive integration of theory and practice.

However, it is the process of analysis that is vital to generating productive ideas from 'data' or content gathered through the initial research. In the following chapter, analysis will be discussed in relation to the above methods of experiencing and understanding place, and in relation to the geo/graphic design process.



**The place of documentation and analysis:
Documenting and analysing place**

Analysis enables us to see things from a different perspective and generate new ideas from 'data' that has been gathered and recorded. In this research analysis is key to bridging the theoretical and practical divide that has developed in cultural geography between conventional written journal articles and unconventional, experimental research methods with regard to the understanding and representation of place. It will also enable the development of holistic work that links a theoretical understanding of place and its geographical processes, to a graphic design practice-led articulation of this. As part of the geo/graphic design process, analysis enables this move from an embodied, multi-faceted experience of place to a re/presentation of place communicated through typographic and graphic interventions.

The following chapter discusses the methods used for documenting place and the process of analysis undertaken. Photography, is used throughout this research as a way of recording images of interest during the walking process, in order to help frame one's thinking about place and one's particular interest; what one might call 'mapping' is used both as a way of recording elements of data and as a tool for analysis; and, cultural probe packs were developed as a way of collecting a range of different perspectives about everyday life in Hackney. The primary model of analysis used throughout this particular phase of the research is Seidel's (1998) 'noticing, collecting and thinking' and the application of this process has led to both seamless progressions from data to design, and to obvious shifts in thinking that have changed the course of the research and practice. Writing has also been used throughout all phases of the research as both a method of documenting place and as a tool to assist with analysis and the productive progression of the action-reflection. This has primarily been undertaken using a series of sketchbooks and a blog. Although this discussion of analysis resides in a separate chapter within the thesis, the process of experience, documentation, analysis, and design were never separate—analysis, the documentation of ideas, and reflection were continual processes throughout every stage of the research.

7.1 Documenting place

My primary means of documenting place in the early stages of the physical exploration of Hackney was through photography. Armed with my camera, I recorded images I found of interest, essentially employing Wolfinger's (2002) strategy of 'salience hierarchy'. At this point I had no specific focus,

I was simply walking and taking photographs as a way of gathering my thoughts and ideas, so the photographs were not only inevitably subjective but also hugely diverse. However through analysis a broad theme emerged as the majority showed traces of ordinary, everyday human intervention within the built environment; whether that was typography in various forms; ornaments placed outside shops; or, ‘ghost bikes’ placed to mark the loss of a cyclist (figs. 221–223). It seemed I was interested in revealing hidden narratives of place. The *Newsagents’ windows* project stems directly from this process, with photographs revealing quite different types of advertisements in two different areas inspiring the idea for the design test project. I continued to take photographs throughout the course of the research, sometimes using them for a very specific task—for example, recording images of the food I ate during the *Food Miles* project—or simply continuing to shoot images that interested me. This approach was also instrumental in the decision to include photography as a task within the probe packs—I was documenting my own experience and view of Hackney, and I was interested in seeing how others might reflect their views and experiences.

Initially I had intended to complement the visual documentation of place with traditional ethnographic field notes. However, it soon became apparent that because I was using walking as a way of framing my ideas about place, and developing ideas for the design test projects, the parameters were far too wide for field notes to function successfully. Most participant observation is undertaken in some kind of closed, finite setting, with specific places, times or participants, thus creating much tighter parameters for the ethnographer to work within. In this instance, my walking was often almost the opposite of that scenario, so any field notes I did attempt had something of a scattergun feel to them and proved unproductive other than to reinforce the ongoing, processual nature of place. I did however use field notes productively during the *Food Miles* test project and these will be discussed more fully in section four of this chapter, *Writing and reflecting on place*.

Some aspects of the research were also recorded spatially. Before establishing the specific idea for the *Food Miles* test project, I recorded all commercial premises from Kingsland Road to Stamford Hill, by walking the length of the road and mapping their position, name, and type of business in a sketchbook (fig. 224). This mapping crystallised my sense that



Fig. 221: Car wash entrance, Dunston Road



Fig. 222: Ornaments outside shop, Kingsland Road



Fig. 223: Ghost bike, Forest Road

food was the predominant focus of the trading on the road, and used a traditional geographic method of recording place. Similar re-appropriation of traditional approaches to fieldwork can be seen in both the work of Lorimer & MacDonald (2002) and Phillips (2004). Other test projects, for example the *Hackney Conversations* prints recorded where the 'data' was discovered—the spatial connection to place (fig. 225). The *Type Cast* participatory maps also used the traditional form of the map as a way for participants to locate their personal descriptions within Hackney.

The activity of structuring or grouping data, often in quite a physical way on screen or in a sketchbook, involves processes that could be described as mapping. In particular the *Type Cast* and *Death of the Author* test projects and *Newsagents' windows* utilised this type of process in order to clarify and reveal repetitions, emerging categories, and similarities within the 'data' (fig. 226). Such 'mapping' processes are also used regularly by graphic designers in order to plan out the flow of multi-page documents, and the similarity with traditional geographic methods of recording place makes it an appropriate geo/graphic tool.

Diagrammatic processes were also used in the early stages of the research to map out the theoretical territory, to begin to visualise the stages of the geo/graphic design process; and, to explore links between cultural geographic theory, the practice of ethnographic research, and the practice of design. For example, the diagram shown in fig. 227 is a very early attempt to map out the stages of the geo/graphic design process from the contrasting perspectives of Massey and Tuan's definitions of place. Clearly situating the design process as separate to the early stages of research is misplaced and inadvertently devalues the role graphic design and my subject specific understanding has played throughout this research; it therefore does not illustrate the interdisciplinary nature of the process. The oppositional pairs of experimental/traditional or open/closed are perhaps also a little simplistic. However, it was a useful exercise in order to think about the relationship of research and analysis methods to the different types of approaches, and the role that chance can play at different stages of the process.

So, recording one's perception of place, in tandem with its exploration, begins to build understanding and trigger the process of analysis. However, at this stage the research was informed only from my perspective, and as I stated previously, involving others to gain alternative perspectives was

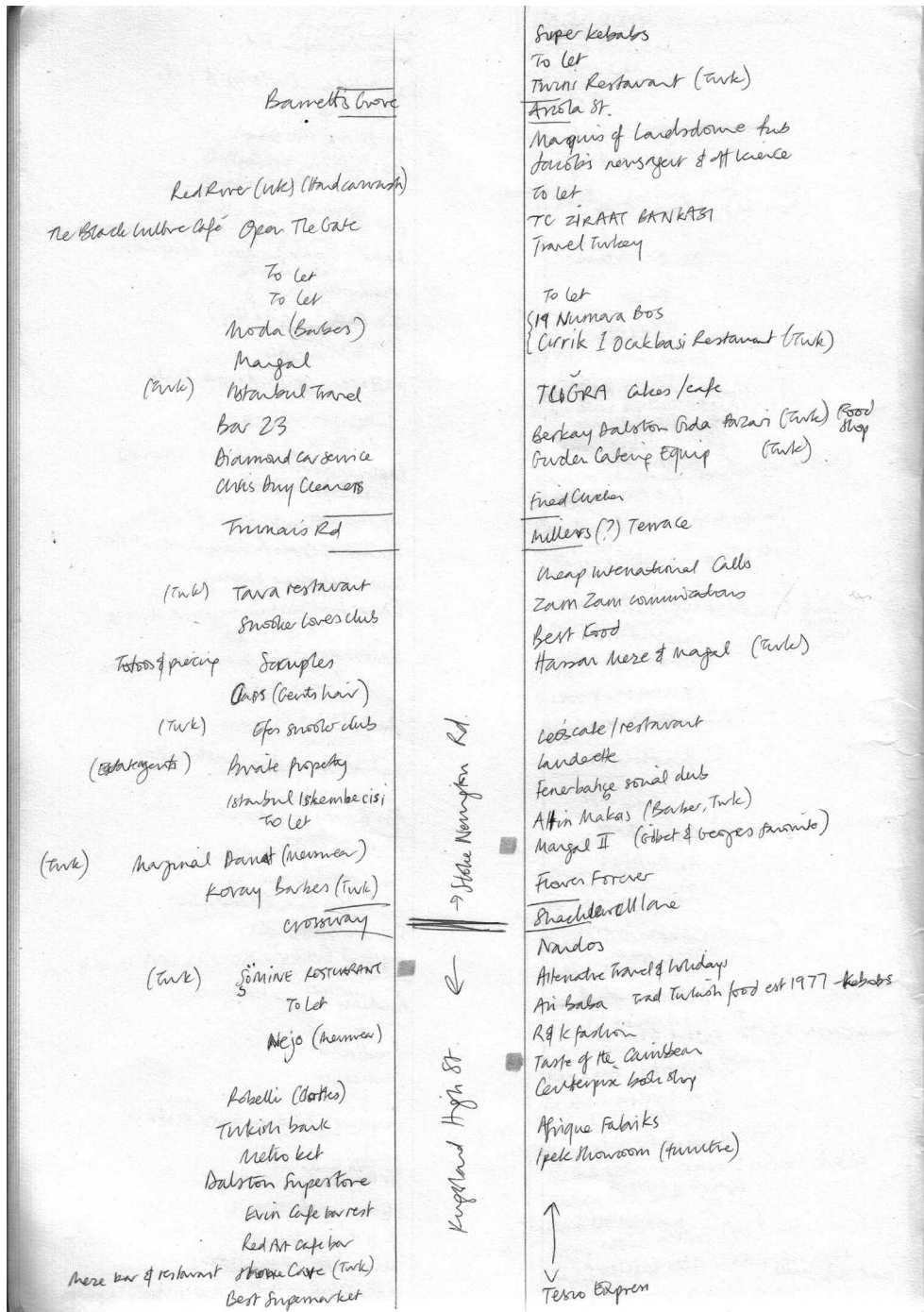


Fig. 224: Example from sketchbook showing mapping of Kingsland Road

Hertford Road, 3.21pm, 20 April 2009

Fig. 225: Example of spatial information: **Hackney conversations**

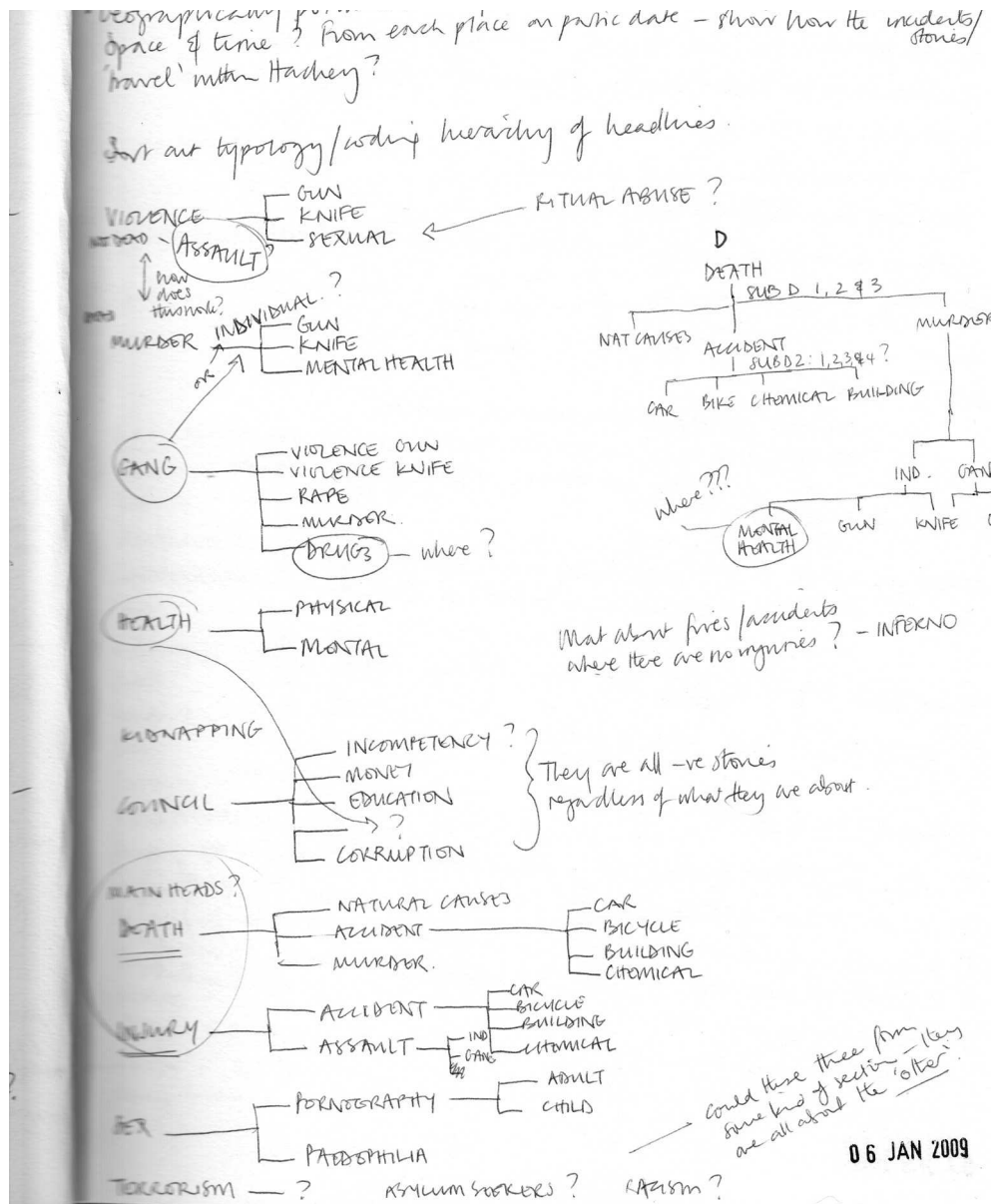


Fig. 226: Example from sketchbook showing mapping of **Hackney Gazette** headline data

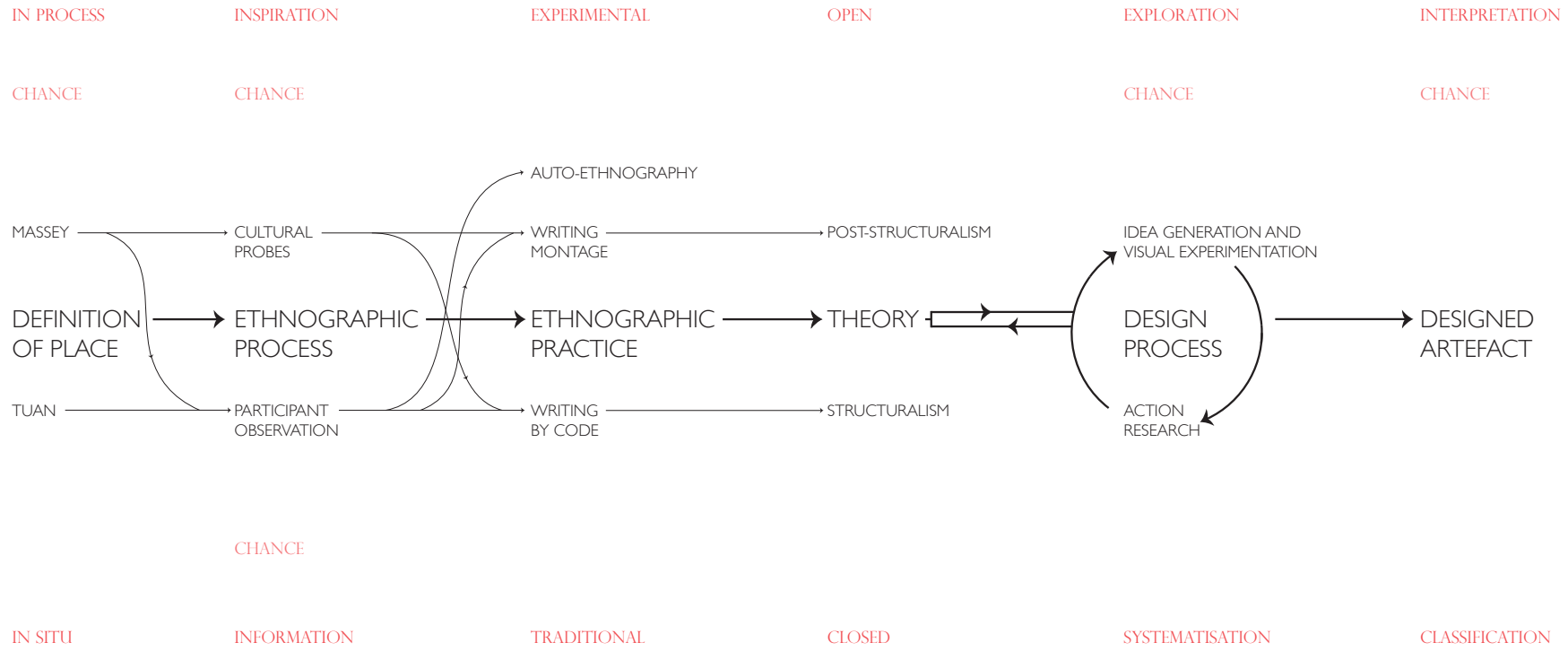


Fig. 227: Early diagram of the geo/graphic design process showing theoretical links

an aim from the outset. My initial method for this was to design a cultural probe pack to be distributed to participants living and/or working in Hackney.

7.2 Probing place

The cultural probes in this instance consisted of a series of postcards, a twelve shot disposable camera, a memory/story sheet, a recipe sheet, and a journey log (fig. 228). All materials were designed in such a way as to both remove associations with traditional 'scientific' types of questionnaire-based research and to reduce the 'distance' between researcher and participant. To this end the language used was open and informal and the majority of images used were bold and colourful photographs, which were predominantly everyday types of objects or scenes, for example, a doormat, road markings, and a view of blue sky and clouds. For the postcards in particular the chosen images attempted not to 'lead' or prejudice the participants in any way regarding their response. Through the information sheets, participants were also reassured that it is their opinions that counted, that there was no such thing as a 'wrong answer' and that their answers could be as simple or as detailed as they wished.



Fig. 228: Cultural probe pack

Postcards

The probe packages contained seven postcards, each with a question on the reverse and an image on the front that relates to the question. Questions were designed to elicit thoughts and opinions relating to each participant's life within Hackney and their thoughts about the borough. The questions were as follows.

- What does Hackney sound like?
- What is your favourite journey in Hackney?
- What makes your house a home?
- What is the best part of your day in Hackney?
- What don't you like about Hackney?
- How has Hackney changed?
- What is the best thing about Hackney?

I chose to include postcards as they are a media that participants would probably be familiar with, and one that is associated with 'an informal, friendly mode of communication' (Gaver et al 1999: 23) Postcards are also a form of graphic design that traditionally reflects a view of an idealised city, with a dominant narrative of power and affluence, that has little relation to the everyday life of the residents (Miles 2002). By including the postcards in the pack the media is subverted and détourned, and the narrative revealed becomes one of the ordinary and the everyday.

Disposable camera

Each pack included a twelve exposure disposable camera, although the participants were offered the choice of using their own digital camera if they possessed one. The disposable camera had a list of shots the participant was requested to take within Hackney pasted onto the cardboard cover. The requests for pictures were as follows:

- Your favourite place
- Somewhere that is busy
- Somewhere that is peaceful
- Your favourite view

Something that is everyday

Something that makes you sad or angry

Something unusual

Something that makes you happy

What do your dreams look like?

Three exposures were left for participants to photograph anything within Hackney that they wished. The ethnographic process enables the inclusion of a variety of views throughout the work—both visual and textual—that enables a broader response to the complexities of place, and this type of auto-photography offered an opportunity to design with images I had not produced myself. For example, in terms of images, my photography is a product of my design training and my particular aesthetic preferences. It is framed in a particular way and this therefore influences what I shoot and how I shoot it. I am not suggesting here that the participants' photographs are in some way more 'natural' or 'neutral', as clearly all photographs are mediated and framed in some way, but they undoubtedly offer a wider perspective, in both execution and subject matter.

Memory/story sheet

The memory/story sheet simply asked participants to write down a memory or story about Hackney. The request was left open so participants could tell a personal story, or one that was less meaningful to them personally, but of local, or perhaps even national, significance. This sheet was perhaps one of the more time consuming elements of the pack, but I felt its inclusion was important. Places are, to an extent, constructed by stories (Bird 2002, Shields 1991)—from local folklore, to 'urban myths', or stories that appear in the media. Hackney is an example of an area that has had a fairly large amount of negative national media attention over the past five years, and this will have no doubt had an impact on how the borough is viewed and the construction of a place-image. The stories from the participants were an opportunity to see what was important to them and also to explore a different vantage point to that of the national media.

Recipe sheet

The recipe sheet asked participants what their favourite recipe was, and how to make it. It also asked whether someone has given them the recipe and, if so, who. Hackney is a multi-cultural borough and many communities have settled in specific areas—for example the Jewish community at Stamford Hill, and the Turkish community in Stoke Newington. Each area tends to be served by a range of shops selling traditional foodstuffs and ingredients specific to the local community. The intent of the recipe sheets was to reveal something of this diversity of cuisine, and to reveal contacts with other members of families via recipes that have been handed down within a family.

Journey log

Participants were asked to note any journeys they make within Hackney over the course of a week, in the booklet provided. Examples were given and they were asked to note the following:

Time of departure

Destination

Purpose of journey

Type of transport

Who did you go with?

Time of return

This could be seen as somewhat more quantitative in terms of the information requested than the rest of the probe packs. However the intention was to gather patterns or rhythms of movement within the borough.

I had hoped to engage a minimum of thirty participants, and 33 packs were ultimately distributed. Participants were recruited through a variety of ways. Many responded to calls sent via emails to organisations within Hackney, such as *Hackney Silver Surfers*, various tenants and residents associations, and *The Hackney Society*. Other participants, not linked to these organisations, were forwarded the original email. Five participants were recruited through my personal contacts in Hackney—three friends, and two students I had previously taught who are now living in Hackney.

Of the 33 packs distributed, 27 were returned. The majority of the packs were completed in full, but some were incomplete. One of the non-returns was due to ill health, and two to changing circumstances with regard to employment or family responsibilities. However, possibly impacting on both the take up and return of the packs, was the fact that no financial incentive was offered in exchange for participation. The distribution of participants in relation to gender, age, ethnicity and length of residency in Hackney was as follows:

Female: 21

Male: 6

18–24: 1 (4%)

25–34: 7 (26%)

35–44: 6 (22%)

45–54: 3 (11%)

55–64: 2 (7%)

65–74: 5 (19%)

75 +: 3 (11%)

White British: 19 (70%)

White Irish: 3 (11%)

White other: 4 (15%)

Caribbean: 1 (4%)

Length of residency ranges between 3 months and 75 years, with a total of over 520 years of residency between the participants. The median length of residency equates to 15 years; the mean, 19 years.

Much as I was disappointed with the overall spread of participants in relation to gender and ethnicity, this variance to the Hackney norm does not adversely affect the probes as a method, or the results of the research. Firstly, probes are not designed to be used in large quantities, nor are they designed to ‘quantify’ or ‘classify’ respondents in the way other, more

traditional methods are. Secondly, place is complex—it can't be 'averaged out' in some way, so the gathering of more and more respondents is not necessarily going to lead to 'better' answers. Thirdly, the goal of this research is primarily to develop a geo/graphic design process. To this end the diverse 'data' collected from the combination of research methods is used as content with which to inspire and drive the design test projects, not to develop an overarching 'theory' of Hackney or its residents.

The probes enabled participants to take a fresh look at their everyday lives, to see places they often take for granted in a new light, and several of the participants commented on their enjoyment of this process. The responses were hugely diverse—partly due to the different types of respondents, but also due to the open questions and the range of tasks. The probes generate an enormous amount of 'data'—for example, the number of photographs generated in this instance was approximately 300, and the completed postcards numbered around 170. These large quantities of 'data' will be discussed further, in relation to analysis, in the following section. One of the frustrations of the method is perhaps a sense of 'wastefulness'. One can be inspired, as I was in the *Stuff* test project, by the response to two or three answers to one question. In my case, and I am sure in many others, this leaves literally hundreds of other answers, photographs, and stories 'dormant'—not because they are not inspirational, just because the research has taken a different direction due to the initial analysis. However, it seems that the focus of the probes is to ask very open questions, ones that are not asked with a hypothesis in mind, therefore one is, in a sense, speculating to accumulate. In my case, the packs asked a range of questions about a very wide subject as they were part of a 'scoping tactic' to find out about the life of participants in Hackney in general. Perhaps with tighter parameters the design of the tasks could reflect less diversity, however one can never legislate for what one might be inspired by and, therefore, what might be acted on and what cast aside.

However, even though many of the returns were not used directly within the design test projects I would say that all of the tasks provided responses that were interesting and inspiring, and cumulatively they gave me a fascinating insight into life in Hackney. For example, the postcards reveal Hackney to be a place of birdsong and sirens, a place where green spaces, Regent's Canal, and the ability to close one's front door and shut out the world offer a respite from the hectic spaces of Mare Street and

Dalston. Conversely it is revealed as a place blighted not only by litter, crime and council corruption, but also by negative perceptions, and as a place where a more positive perception of 'edginess' has triggered new development at the expense of local landmarks like the Four Aces club. Hackney is described as becoming 'posher', and no longer being 'a byword for crime' but a surprisingly fashionable place, yet this change is perceived as the development of a 'fake' Hackney by some and the development is unwanted by many—'go away hipsters!' says one respondent. Above all, though, it is the people, the diversity, the 'buzz', the neighbours, and the friends and family that make Hackney home.

The photographs echo many of these responses, with parks, the canal and nature often recorded as favourite places and views, and litter and new development recorded as things that make people sad or angry. The stories included many personal memories, thoughts and feelings about moving to, and living in, Hackney; memories of living in self-build co-ops in the early 1980s; a memory of the awful dereliction of Broadway Market coupled with an amazement that it has recovered to become the place it is today; a feeling of belonging and being safe because of the close proximity of people who had also come to Hackney from other countries and cultures; a conversation with a taxi driver who had emigrated to East London in the 1950s that prompted a realisation that every resident of Hackney has a history embedded in the borough, even if they live in Shoreditch where 'the moment is the mantra'; and, a vivid recollection of walking through London Fields during the war and narrowly escaping down into a bomb shelter before a V1 rocket exploded. The stories are all powerful examples of the ongoing process and construction of Hackney; not through buildings and development, but through social interaction, chance meetings, and spontaneous conversations.

Perhaps the task in the pack that functioned least in the way that I had hoped was the recipe sheet. This may have been partly due to the lack of diversity in relation to ethnicity in the returns, but perhaps also highlights that in a global world, and in a place such as Hackney that has so many diverse communities resident, we often eat far beyond our original roots. Finally, the journey log reveals diverse patterns of movement within and through Hackney; those who worked a traditional Monday to Friday week displayed a repetitive rhythm in the week, in contrast to their weekend; those who were retired but still active had less of a distinction between

weekdays and the weekends; some respondents remained very local, mostly travelling within Hackney; others travelled out of the borough regularly. The journey log also revealed much about the participants' social lives beyond the simple spatial data; some retired participants, although very active, made the majority of their journeys alone; others clearly had weekly points of contact with specific groups of people, for example, yoga, bingo or lunch clubs, with these often occurring in the day; and, younger respondents seemed to have a more irregular social life, but one that happened predominantly at evenings and weekends.

So, cultural probes return an incredibly rich and inspiring body of 'data' and there is no doubt that this method gave me access to a huge range of personal responses to, and stories about, Hackney that I certainly would not have been able to gather in any other way. Although 'wasteful' in the sense that very few of the responses have been directly used, the overview of Hackney gleaned from the range of responses is incredibly broad, and at the same time some of the vivid detail offered in the individual responses is quite astounding. One of the great successes of the method does seem to be its ability to close the gap between the researcher and the participant, and really involve them in the process, thus facilitating very generous responses. Ultimately, the probes are intended to function as inspiration in relation to the production of designed artefacts. However, the literature is unclear as to how this might happen, simply stating there is a distinction between information and inspiration, and that the probes resist analysis (Gaver et al 2004). My understanding, having employed the cultural probes as one of my methods, is that some form of analysis must be undertaken to enable the probes to move to their desired function of 'inspiration'. This will be discussed further in the next section that focuses on the methods and tools of analysis used within this research.

7.3 The place of 'noticing, collecting and thinking'

As I stated earlier, the process of analysis and reflection runs through this research from beginning to end. It is almost impossible to separate the exploring of place from its recording; the recording and re/presenting of place from its analysis. It is a constant process—always informing, reaffirming or reframing both theory and practice. As this section reveals, this process of 'noticing, collecting and thinking' can sometimes seem instinctive, almost undetectable, a seamless progression from data, to theory, and from theory to graphic design practice, or vice versa. At

others, the impact of its application can be more dramatic, with sudden realisations or shifts in thinking. The iterative, recursive nature of the process is also discussed in relation to design and the development of the design test projects. Finally, the cultural probes are discussed in relation to the process of analysis and their shift from information to inspiration.

The *Freecycle* test project is an example of what I would describe as a 'seamless progression' from analysis of 'data' to design. After sampling the 'data' I was left with approximately 2,000 messages to analyse, which needed to be transferred from the original emails to a *Microsoft Word* document. I then transferred the messages to a coding schedule (fig. 229) that recorded the type of post, the specific item, the broad category of items this belonged to, its brand, the member's location and reason for posting. I then analysed these initial findings in a variety of ways; for example, by type of item, area, brand, and type of posting. I also conducted some quantitative analysis in relation to a range of elements; for example, types of posts, types of items, prevalent brands, and the most active areas of Hackney (fig. 230). During each phase of the handling of the data I was getting to know it better, seeing more and more details, noticing more and more quirky posts, strange coincidences, seasonal fluctuations and repetitive themes—moving more from a quantitative analysis to qualitative. This felt, in some ways, a similar process to that of the *Stuff* book, though instead of building relationships with participants, I was developing a relationship with the data.

This relationship with the data, the knowing in detail, is not only a key function of the process of analysis, but also enables a smooth transition between 'data' and design. For example, the qualitative statements that had been developed through the analysis of the messages—which could be described as using the process of 'code-writing'—were used as section dividers within the book (figs. 231–232), the seasonal fluctuations that had been identified were used to show time unfolding through the course of the pages (figs. 233–234), and the Freecycle 'rules' were used in conjunction with particular messages to show, for example, how the 'value' of some items may decrease over time (figs. 235–236). So, the iterative, recursive process of analysis enabled the development of an understanding of the data and enabled me to use it both in terms of the design, and also in terms of generating the content and structure that would form the 'conceptual container' for the piece of work.

7.3 The place of 'noticing, collecting and thinking'

Type of post	Item	Item type 1	Brand	Location	Poster	Reason	St
Offered	Globe lanterns	Lighting	Ikea	N16			
Wanted	Slide projector	Photographic equipment				For art project	
Offered	Shelves	Furniture	Ikea	E9 opposite town hall			
Wanted	Electric winch	DIY Equipment				To winch small sculpture	
Wanted	Kitchen scales	Kitchen Equipment: non electrical					
Offered	Boxes	Packing		Stoke Newington			
Wanted	Table	Furniture					
Offered	Bookcase	Furniture		N16			
Received	Gas cooker	White goods	Beko				
Wanted	Lamps and lampshades	Lighting		Stoke Newington			
Offered	B&W darkroom	Photographic Equipment		London Fields, top of Broadway Market			1:
Wanted	Dbi bed	Furniture		Stoke Newington		Moving into unfurnished room.	
Wanted	Boxes	Packing		E2		Moving next week	
Wanted	Rug	Flooring		Stamford Hill			
Offered	Bookcase	Furniture	Ikea				
Offered	PC, flatscreen monitor & speakers	Computer		Foulden Rd, Stoke Newington			1:
Wanted	Drawers & cupboard	Furniture		Stoke Newington		Moving into unfurnished room.	
Wanted	Hair crimpers	Beauty equipment					
Offered	Boxes	Packing		Clapton		Just moved	1:
Taken	3 x bicycle wheels & tyres	Cycle Equipment					1:
Wanted	Egg boxes & jam jars	Kitchen equipment: non-electrical		Durston Rd E5		Children's art project	
Wanted	Chest of drawers	Furniture		Shacklewell Lane		Just moved back to Hackney	
	Bath mat	Bathroom accessories					
	Lawnmower	Garden Equipment					
	Waterproof trousers	Clothing					
Wanted	Full length mirror	Décor		Stoke Newington		Moving into unfurnished room.	
Offered	Dbi mattress	Furniture					
Wanted	Oil drum cut in half lengthways	Garden Equipment		Shacklewell Lane		To burn charcoal in	
Wanted	Travel cot	Baby Equipment		Clapton/Stamford Hill		For child minder	
	Highchair	Baby Equipment					
	Baby bouncer	Baby Equipment					

Fig. 229: Coding schedule: **Freecycle**

<p>18/7/09 - SATURDAY</p> <p>POSTS: 35 - OFFERED 22, WANTED 6, TAKEN 4 RECEIVED 2, REOFFERED 1</p> <p><u>OFFERED</u>: 24 total Furniture: 11H 1-6 Books: 1 Decor: 1 White goods: 1 TV: 11 - 2 Music: 1 Musical equip: 1 Ed mats: 1 DIY mats: 11 - 2 Film/TV: 1 Kitchen equip: 1 Comp equip: 1 Luggage: 1 Cycle equip: 1 Plants: 1 Mugs: 1 House elect: 1</p> <p><u>WANTED</u>: 8 total Furniture: 111 - 3 Cycles: 11 - 2 Plants: 1 DIY mats: 1 Mobile phone: 1</p> <p><u>TAKEN</u>: 4 total Sports equip: 1 Furniture: 11 Computer: 1</p> <p><u>RECEIVED</u>: 3 total VCR: 1 Film/TV: 1 Baby equip: 1</p> <p><u>REOFFERED</u> Decor: 1</p> <p>Look at reasons for cycles/computers/phones. seem to be stated often - broken/lost/stolen.</p>		<p><u>AREA OFFERED</u></p> <p>N16: 111 E8: 11H 1 E9: 111 E5: 111 N1: 1 Unknown: 11H 1 E2: 1 EC2: 1</p> <p><u>AREA WANTED</u></p> <p>N16: 1111 Unknown: 1 E2: 1 E8: 11</p> <p><u>AREA REOFFERED</u></p> <p>E8: 1</p> <p><u>Furniture 2 out of 6 = IKEA</u></p> <p><u>Baby equip</u> Offered Taken Wanted</p> <p>None —</p> <p><u>Reasons</u></p> <p>Wanted Cycles 2 - both stolen Mobile phones wanted 1 - lost. Wanted computer - none</p>	
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Fig. 230: Example from sketchbook showing quantitative data analysis: **Freecycle**

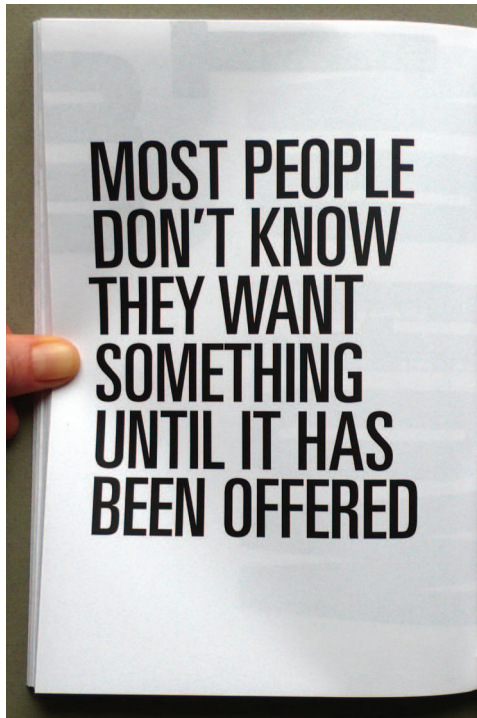


Fig. 231: Section divider: **Freecycle**



Fig. 232: Section divider: **Freecycle**



Fig. 233: Example of seasonal posting:
Freecycle



Fig. 234: Example of seasonal posting:
Freecycle



Fig. 235: Example of rules: **Freecycle**

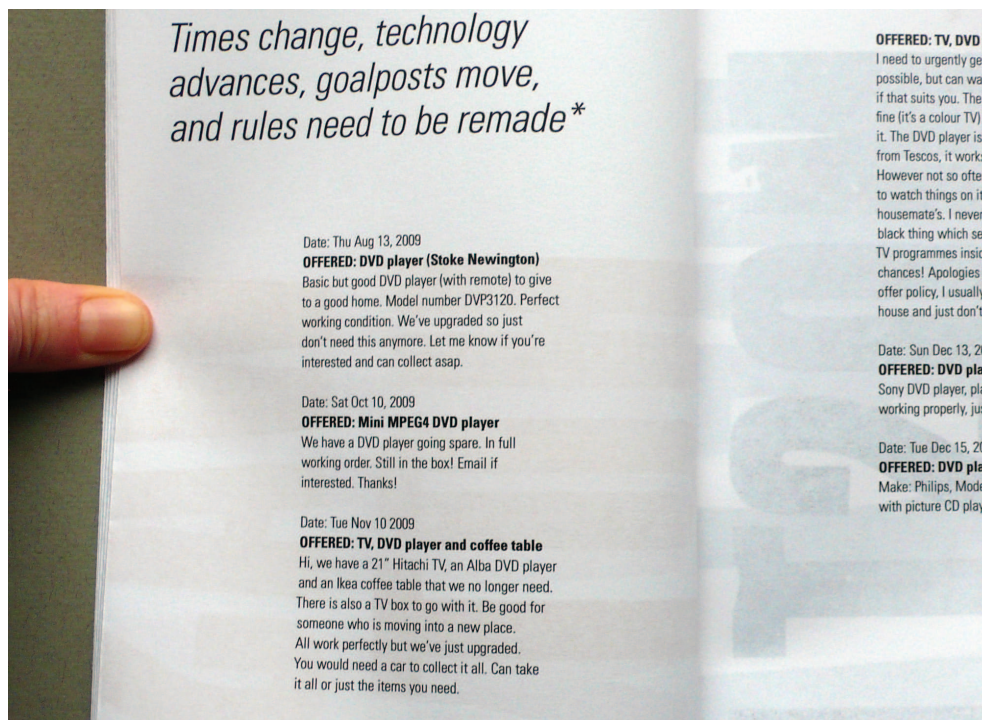


Fig. 236: Example of rules being broken: **Freecycle**

My analysis was also no doubt informed by my practice as a graphic designer. With audience in mind, I wasn't just analysing the data in order to develop a range of theories about the Hackney Freecycle group, but as part of this I was also interested in drawing out elements from the data that could be used to engage the reader in some way; perhaps through humour, irony or strange contradictions. Whilst this may have some similarities to an academic author inserting pithy quotes from participants into their journal articles, here the quotes are interpreted within the context of the typography and layout and are therefore used in a more *subjective*, proactive way in terms of drawing in or entertaining the reader.

Both *EWG* test projects reflect more dramatic shifts in their trajectory, triggered by this ongoing process of 'noticing, collecting and thinking'. One of the things that drew me to Seidel's (1998) articulation of analysis was its pragmatic explanation of the process, and its ability, within these simple terms, to deal with data, and theories from that data, that range from the multiple and complex to the minimal and seemingly obvious. In fact, the insights that ultimately led to the *EWG* test projects were not the product of hours of deep contemplation, but they still made a great difference to the progression of the visual work. In *A Haptic Journey*, my initial impressions of Edinburgh led me to unthinkingly run my hands across the stone of the buildings as I walked. When I noticed this, I began to think about the textures of place and how Edinburgh seemed so very solid (figs. 237–238). I then began to think about how I could translate this sensation into print and began to collect rubbings of the textures. As I continued to explore Edinburgh on foot I began to notice more and more different textures within the city that I continued to collect.

With *Old Town* the initial physical experience of place again led me to think about how to translate or interpret this into print. Here a moment of chance shifted my thinking very quickly. As I was walking down the Royal Mile I noticed several facsimile editions of old maps of Edinburgh displayed in the window of a shop. Some had originally been etched and the style of the cross hatching used to show buildings created a dramatic distinction of negative and positive space on the map (fig. 239). I immediately began to think of these negative and positive spaces in relation to the light and dark of my Old Town experience. These two test projects illustrate a somewhat different aspect of, and approach to, analysis than shown in *Freecycle*. Here, both the process of 'data' gathering and the analysis is a much more open



Fig. 237: Detail of stone facade, Edinburgh



Fig. 238: Detail of stone facade, Edinburgh

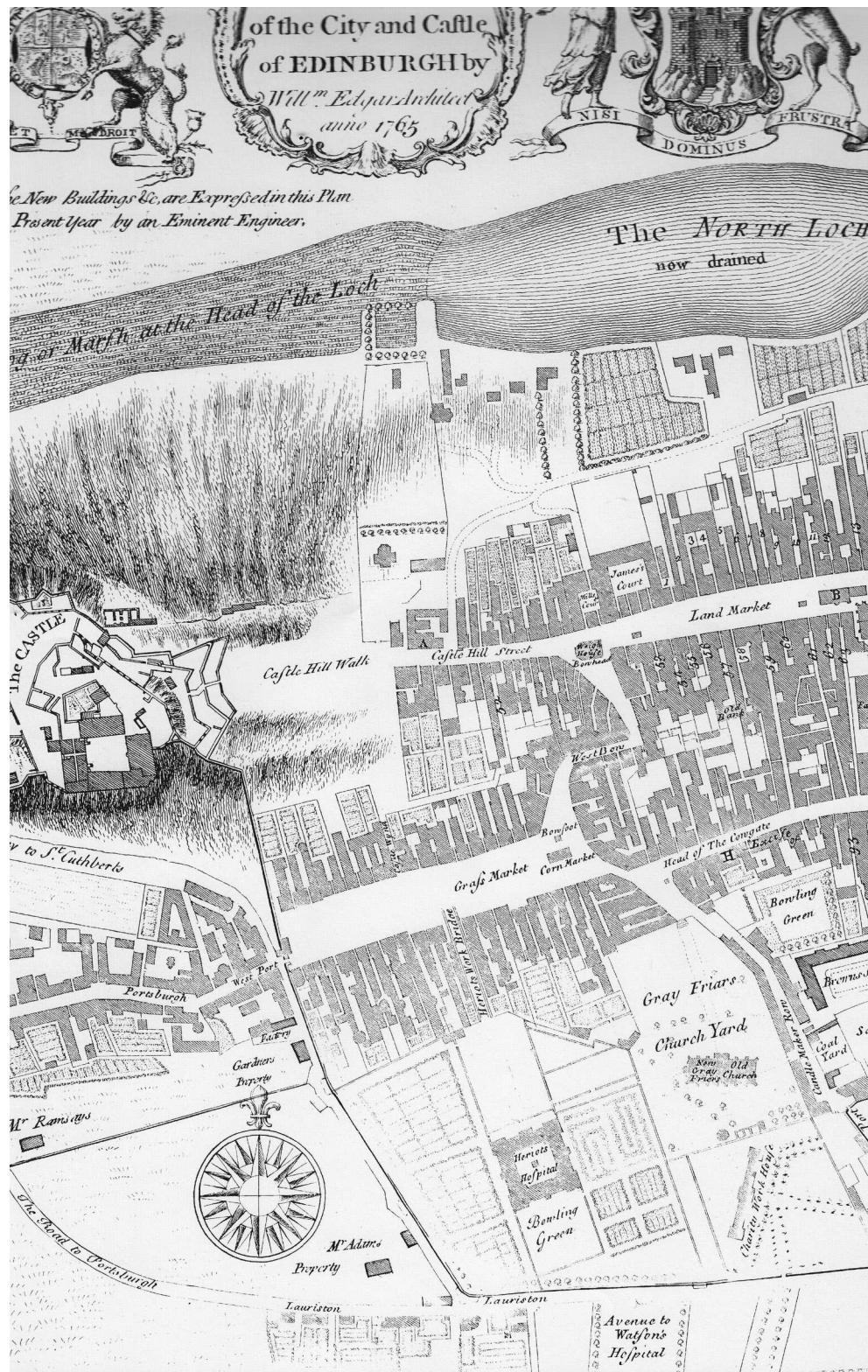


Fig. 239: Facsimile edition of 1765 map of Edinburgh Old Town

one. The process remains open to chance encounters, and ideas that are developed tangentially. There is perhaps a similarity with the intention of the probes here and to the earlier point made within this chapter in section two, *Experiencing place*, about the productive, yet paradoxical nature of at once 'letting go' and becoming more hands on. This is not to suggest the analysis in this case is somehow unfocussed, but perhaps because of the experiential, immediacy of the 'data' generating method, the analysis is at once able to be focused and open.

One further example also highlights the productive use of this type of analysis within the development of the *Food Miles* design test project, and in particular its ability to develop the parameters and reach of the project as it unfolds. Perhaps less dramatic in its shifts than the *EWG* test projects, *Food Miles* developed incrementally through the process of analysis. The test project stemmed from noticing the prevalence of restaurants and grocery shops on the stretch of road, and thinking about the importance of food with regard to identity and belonging. The experiential research method of eating and drinking that drew on the shift in my thinking through my participation in *EWG*, enabled a multi-sensory experience of place, and one that offered a multi-faceted experience in terms of 'noticing, collecting and thinking'. The 'data' collection became an intertextual process, building up interrelated strands of content, like links in a chain. Here, the 'iterative, progressive, recursive and holographic' (Seidel 1998) process of the analysis was key.

For example, several of my visits led me to think more broadly about the food and my experience, and how they related both to my understanding of Hackney and beyond. The experience of buying food in a Jewish bakery on the afternoon of Shabbat led me to discover what kosher means; eating at a Vietnamese restaurant led me to find out more about the lucky cat symbol; eating Turkish breakfast engendered a reflection on whether breakfast is the only remaining meal that retains some kind of cultural signifier; and, watching football in a Brazilian café led me to wonder whether football is a global conversation opener. More often than not, when this happened, the parameters of the design test project would shift to encompass new content that positioned it within a broader context—essentially new iterations developed through this progressive, recursive process. The process of 'noticing, collecting and thinking' through 'data' therefore entails making and understanding connections and

disconnections, and using these in ways that are able to reiterate and progress the research question. But is one able to apply this type of analysis to all 'data', or do some types resist analysis, as is allegedly the case with the cultural probes?

What seems to remain unclear in the literature about probes is how one moves from return, to inspiration, to design. In fact, this process is perhaps neatly sidestepped by the suggestion that because the probes function as inspiration, they are resistant to analysis (Gaver et al 2004: 53). Whilst I do agree that the completed probe packs are in effect a 'beginning' rather than an end, and function as something of a 'trigger' for the designer/researcher, I do not think these ideas of inspiration and resistance to analysis are as simplistic or as clear as they are sometimes pictured. My experience is that as a designer one is used to working with content—this might be provided by clients, be self-generated, or, as in this case, provided by probe returns. The first task is to make sense of this material or, in more formal terms, to begin analysing it. In working with the probe returns my first approach was to repeatedly read through the different returns noting items of interest or emergent themes—firstly the whole return from each respondent, then the complete sets of returns relating to specific questions or tasks. This process not only enabled me to become familiar with the 'data' in the same way that I had done with the Freecycle messages, it was also clearly employing Seidel's (1998) method of analysis.

My experience is that it is only through analysis that the probes can offer up their potential inspiration, and that it is the designer or researcher that 'activates' this change in status. The participant answers the questions or takes the photographs, but these answers remain as information until the engagement with the designer. Again the process of 'noticing, collecting and thinking' brings further dimensions to bear on the responses. The original probe response and one's thoughts that stem from it interact within one's imagination and thus become inspiration. For example, the response to the question about home that referred to 'stuff' made me think about my own 'stuff' sitting in the loft and how, although it is meaningful to me, it would probably be seen as a suitcase of junk if opened by anyone else. This in turn made me think that, to a greater or lesser degree, most people probably have similar kind of collections, and that they are a way of charting our ongoing lives and offering a tangible way to 'pause' the present and return to the past. This was the point at which the idea for

the *Stuff* test project was triggered. This interaction between probes and designer could be said to mirror Barthes' (1977, 1990) thinking about the text and the reader—in the same way the reader produces the text through his or her engagement with it, so too does the designer with the probe returns.

Perhaps what is partly at the root of this issue of defining the probes as resistant to analysis is the perception of what 'analysis' is. I would suggest that in order to differentiate their method from more traditional social science tools such as questionnaires, Gaver et al (1999, 2004) deliberately sought to position the probes firmly within an art & design context. One way of reinforcing this position was perhaps to deliberately eschew the process of analysis in relation to the probes, thus further encouraging an 'art not science' binary opposition. However, this position is perhaps established in something of an artificial way, as Gaver et al (2004) seem to assume a very narrow, positivist definition of research and analysis one that could 'be conceived primarily in terms of data handling' (Coffey & Atkinson 1996: 6). As we have seen in chapter one, contemporary social scientists are now engaging in a wide range of creative methods that make such a distinction almost redundant, and see analysis as 'essentially imaginative and speculative' (Coffey & Atkinson 1996: 6).

So, whilst the probes do offer an interesting research method, and one that does engage participants creatively in a very different way to some traditional social science research methods, I feel that the contentions over their use have perhaps constrained their impact. The sense that they rely on an artist's intuition to 'conjure up' inspiration may deter many social scientists from using them as a method in their research. The notion that they cannot be adapted is perhaps also problematic. Part of the process of research is to offer one's findings to the research community for validation, reinterpretation and further development. To this end the adaptation of the probes would seem a natural development, rather than a contravening of the method. From the perspective of the bricoleur, and of this research, adaptation and change is crucial, as long as it is undertaken knowingly.

'Noticing, collecting and thinking' is about discovering and developing relationships both individually and collectively within the 'data', the theory, the ethnographic research practice, and the graphic design practice. The means to the success of the above methods of 'data' analysis is the ability to reflect. It is reflection that drives the progressive, iterative and recursive process of analysis, enabling the researcher to form connections,

notice discontinuities and develop theories that further develop their understanding, and trigger another cycle of reflection. Much of this reflection has been undertaken through writing during the course of this research and writing has been a productive strategy both in the recording of place and in progressing the process of analysis.

7.4 Writing and reflecting on place

Rather like the process of walking, writing is central to analysis ‘because it slows thought and perception down’, effectively forcing one

to perceive actively, to make connections, to articulate thoughts and feelings which would otherwise remain at a pre-reflective or practical level of consciousness (Tilley 2004: 223–4, see also Yee 2007: 9).

This section will discuss the different types of reflection undertaken through writing, and the various vehicles through which it occurred. It will also focus on the development of a way of recording place that I term ‘field writing’, and the process of analysis applied to this writing that led to an investigation of montage writing as a tactic for developing multi-linear narratives of place, and the impact of writing, or content, on the process of design.

Much of the reflection during this research has been recorded within a series of sketchbooks and online, on a blog—<http://geo-graphic.blogspot.com>—set up specifically for this purpose. The sketchbooks were predominantly used for reflection-in and on-action (Schön 1987, 1991). The first series of sketchbooks underpinned my analysis and reflection at the outset of the research. Gathering together theoretical ideas drawn primarily from reading outside my own discipline, and initially focusing particularly on ideas of place, these sketchbooks functioned as a ground for recording important points and developing potential cross-pollinations between theory and graphic design practice. I used them as an ongoing space to think productively about place and interpret ideas such as Massey’s (1994, 2005) ‘process’ or Tuan’s (1977) ‘pause’ within the context of graphic design practice (figs. 240–241). For example, very early on in the research, after noting down Massey’s (1994: 153) description of Kilburn

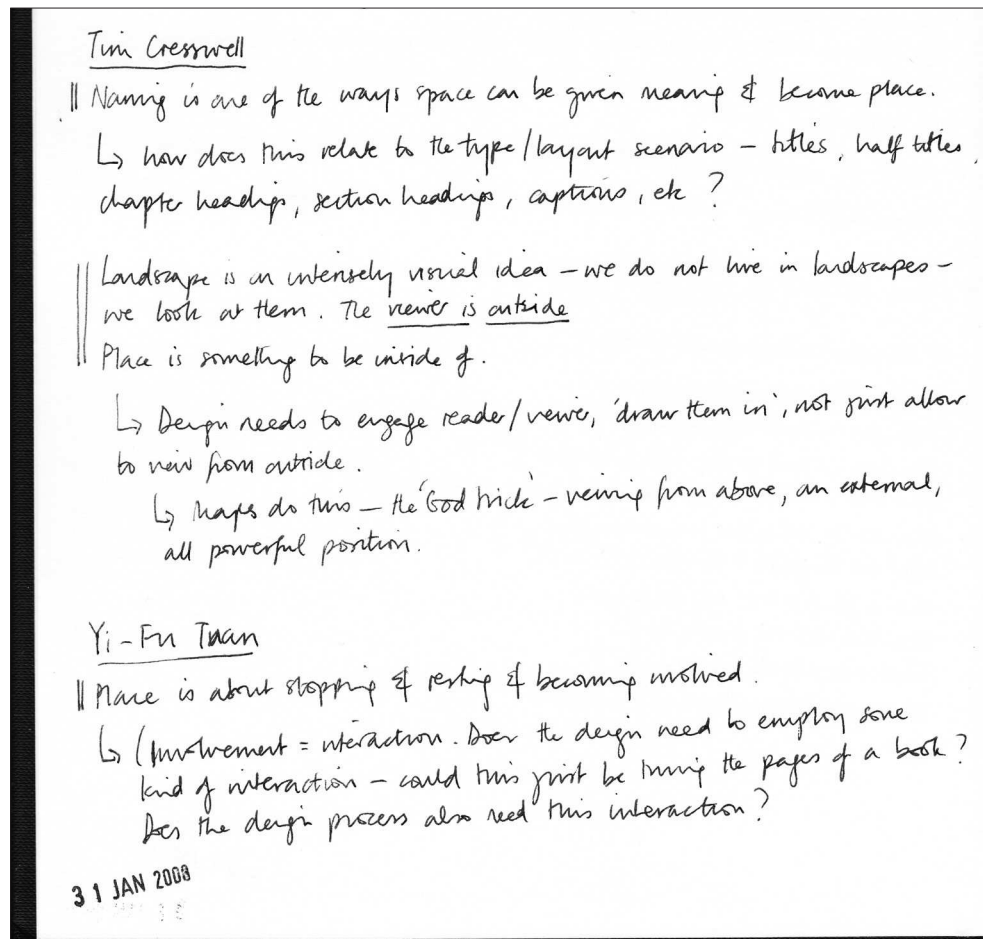


Fig. 240: Sketchbook showing links made between theory and practice

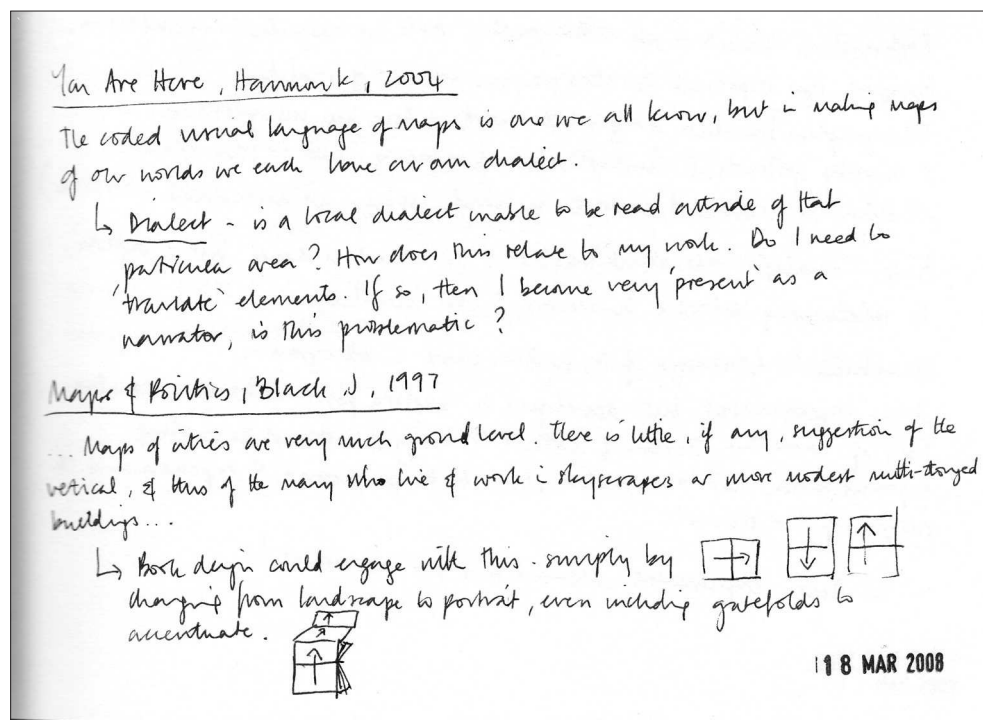


Fig. 241: Sketchbook showing links made between theory and practice

...while Kilburn may have a character of its own, it is absolutely not a seamless coherent identity, a single sense of place which everyone shares.

I wrote the following:

How can this translate to design? Different chapters, non-linear narrative, different perspectives—both content and visual?
(31.01.08)

Whilst reading Soja (1989) and referring to Borges' *The Aleph* (1994), I wondered about language and typography.

Does 'language dictate a sequential succession' (Soja 1994: 2)?
How can I work with content to disrupt this, but still have some sense of legibility? Order and disorder, does that equal deep order? (31.01.08)

These sketchbooks are perhaps a good example of the idea and process of being situated in the 'inbetweenness' (Cocker 2008: 1) of interdisciplinary research.

The second series of sketchbooks underpinned the design test projects and contained my ongoing reflection-in-action—a series of developmental 'conversations' (Schön 1991: 78) with the work, that are key to its progression through the iterative cycles of the design process (figs. 242–243). For example, during the early stages of the Stuff design test project I noted that:

This could link in with strands of work that focus on Newsagents' windows and on the Hackney Freecycle group. It is all about the circulation of stuff—stuff is always on the move until it becomes a 'keepsake' and finds a permanent home (03.07.09).

At the stage of starting to develop the typographic layout I contemplated a potential conceptual approach to the design of the grid:

Could think about very formal construction of grid—golden section/rectangle stuff—the urge to collect is implicit and the golden section and Fibonacci series occur in nature. Fibonacci is also a kind of process: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, etc (12.10.09).

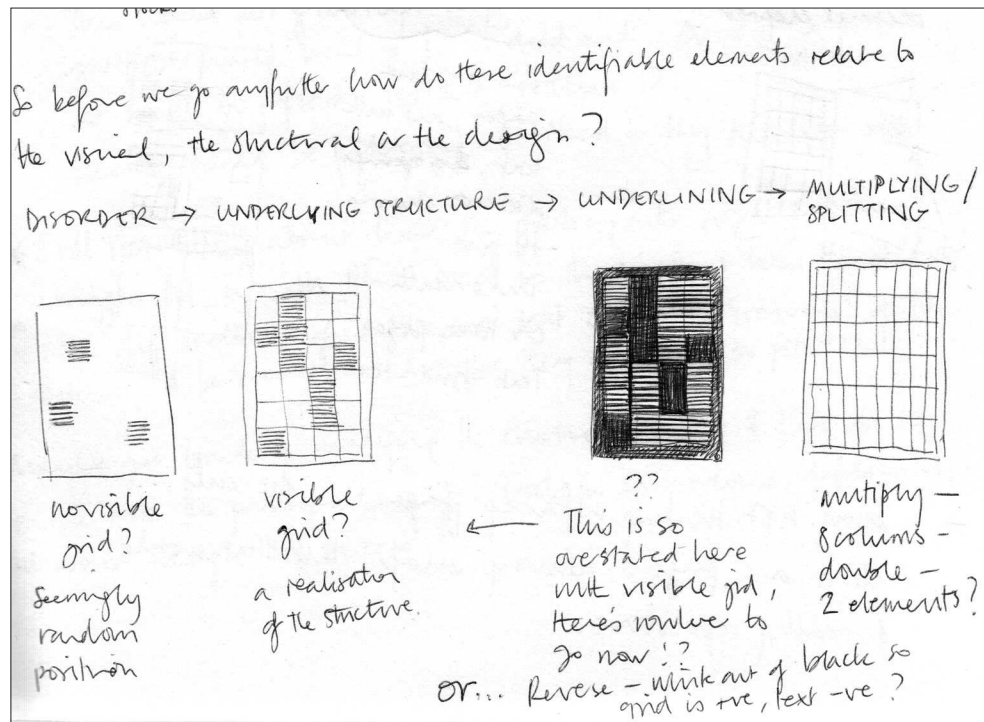


Fig. 242: Sketchbook showing reflection-in-action

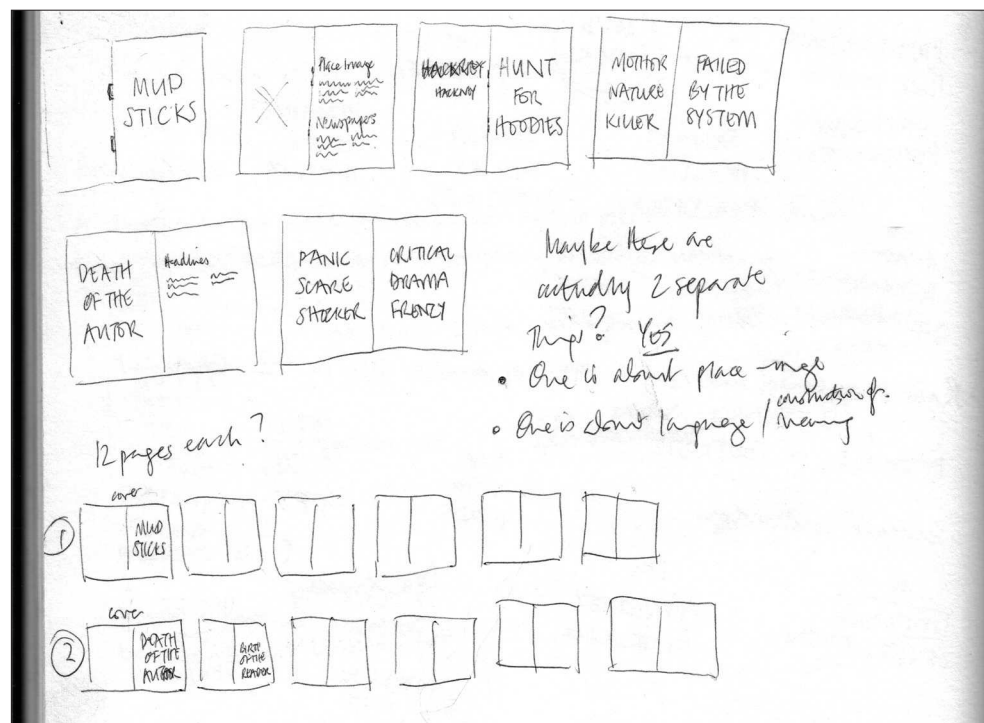


Fig. 243: Sketchbook showing reflection-in-action

Reflections also drove the development of the design test projects through printing out and analysing prototypes, with comments often dealing with the minutiae of typographic choices:

Rethink point size/leading relationship of body copy and quotes—maybe needs to coincide on baseline of every third line of quote (27.10.09).

The blog (fig. 244) was set up specifically to capture more sustained bursts of writing that would more often than not capture reflection-on-action at the completion of a project or prototype. For example, reflecting on how the process of analysis informed the *Freecycle* design test project:

What is interesting here, is that there weren't actually that many iterations in relation to the actual design. The iterations came very much in relation to the content. Through the analysis I noticed more and more things that enabled me to develop not only a clearer idea of content and structure, but also a clearer picture of how I felt the Freecycle group operated (01.03.10).

Or reflecting on an iteration of the *Stuff* design test project:

Elements of the academic essay are allowed to explore more playful typographic settings, with changes in leading, line length and subversion of the grid all being utilised where appropriate to the content. These interventions are fewer and more minimal than the first draft and consequently the book does not become fragmented and lose a sense of rhythm as the pages are turned (13.01.10).


Such reflections would always be undertaken a short while after the event, as I found allowing myself a period of time between completion and interim 'writing up' enabled a much fuller, more considered reflection, reflecting not only on the individual test project, but also its links with those completed previously and its potential for feeding into those that were yet to develop. These more considered reflections would also eventually help form the basis of much of the thesis, and indeed, during the process of the thesis construction analysis continued. In fact, this was an important point within the research as it finally allowed one to take an overview

GEO/GRAPHIC

contact me on a.barnes4@lcc.arts.ac.uk

FRIDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2009

Stuff book in process



Have just put together the first draft of the stuff book. Lots to work on yet though. Format has lost something, I think, and is now a little too big. Think I may need to drop the obsessive Fibonacci based grid in order to give myself more flexibility. The different threads of texts running through the book are also perhaps too separate - there is no productive use of montage in terms of

BLOG ARCHIVE

- ▶ 2010 (15)
- ▼ 2009 (27)
 - ▶ Decen
 - ▼ Novem
 - On Ty
 - Stuff b
 - Excuse
 - Pecha
 - Exp
 - The 'st
- ▶ Octob
- ▶ Septer
- ▶ Augus

ABOUT ME

ALISON BARN
LONDON, UN

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Fig. 244: Screen shot of geo/graphic blog

of the whole process and therefore identify parallels and potentially productive insights that remained undiscovered until these final phases of reflection.

There are clear similarities evident here between Seidel's (1998) idea of 'noticing, collecting and thinking', the design process, and the 'action-reflection cycle' (McNiff & Whitehead 2006: 9). Like the process of 'noticing, collecting and thinking', the processes of reflection and action are not just applied in a self-contained way throughout the course of each individual design test project. They are applied throughout the research journey as a whole, and are vital to its progression, with each test project bringing to bear all the previous research and understanding on its own development. This is perhaps also important for the process of interdisciplinary research itself as it avoids the possibility of test projects exploring individual, unrelated aspects, and enables the research as a whole to avoid falling into a 'silo-like' mentality that separates the disciplines.

Writing also played a part in the development of content for the design test projects. The *Food Miles* test project offered the opportunity to record and explore place through the traditional ethnographic method of field notes (figs. 245–246). Again the writing of these notes provided, as Tilley (2004) suggests, a way in which to slow down and contemplate my surroundings and experience—much like walking. My background as a designer, rather than an ethnographer, inevitably led me to interpret and use the process of field notes in a different way. I perhaps generated less descriptive material at times, and often my notes developed a more reflective, analytical stance in relation to my experience—they could be said to display elements of auto-ethnographic writing.

SÖMINE: 131 Kingsland High Street: 23.06.10

Turkish breakfast: Eggs, cheese, olives, tomato, cucumber, bread, butter, jam, honey and Turkish tea

Sömine is at the crossroads with Shacklewell Lane, so to get to it I have to walk past the end of Ridley Road market. It is another hot, sunny day and Kingsland Road is busy with shoppers. I almost feel that I am abroad as I overhear so many different languages and accents. The restaurant is nearly empty of customers, just a father and daughter at the table behind me. Two Turkish women sit at tables at the back of the place and make the flatbread for the day. I notice that they are open twenty-four hours and that breakfast

29/07/10 19:40. Dali Sambar (main dish) 3.50 plain rice 1.75
salty lassi 1.95.
Since I last visited, a few years ago, Rice & Spice has
become 'New Rice & Spice', not that I can see a difference.
It is nearly 8pm on a Thursday evening, admittedly not
the busiest night of the week, but I am the only customer.
However, in the five or ten minutes I have been here the
phone has rung three times with people ordering takeaways.
I am given a laminated menu and my order is taken shortly
after. I contemplate the South India specialities, but go
for dahl & rice in the end. ~~the dahl~~ I haven't bought
my own dahl, so I opt for a salty lassi as it is the
most interesting thing amongst the coke juice & natter on the
menu. Actually, I don't think I have ever had one before,
He always thought it would be too filling. We shall see.
The tables are laid with 2 cloths, one white & ~~the other~~ on top.

Fig. 245: Example of 'fieldwriting'

^{Yorkshire}
Tea - mixed with a bit of cinnamon & other spices
Red lentils with chickpeas } made
White lentils no chickpeas } the mami
Vegetable stew.
Chat - dahi leaves - dahl is a tea to wake
you up. Its not drugs its legal here.
~~to be~~ Snipped from Ethiopia. Don't swallow the
leaves, just the juice.
He says big Ethiopia community here. He's
been here 15/2 yrs & was the first to open this.
Wants to move to Brick Lane & open restaurant.
Now has internet etc, to make enough money.

Fig. 246: Example of 'fieldwriting'

is served from two in the morning. I wonder if the customers then are getting up for a night shift, or on their way home after an evening out.

My tea arrives in a glass mug with four lumps of sugar. I drop three in. It's a golden brown colour and the sun streaming through the open windows makes it glow. The breakfast arrives. I like the way the slabs of butter are used to separate the runny honey and jam from each other and from the cheese. I start with an olive, and wonder if there is a correct order in which to eat it all. I know that I will go from savoury to sweet as that is what I am used to. A steady stream of people is coming in, but most either want something to take away, or are staff. I think the shift must be about to change. The windows are all wide open and as I lean my elbow on the ledge, I watch people standing just outside, waiting for the lights to change so they can cross the road. As I sit, I wonder if breakfast is the one meal that really defines us as a particular culture or country? I notice that I am the only English person in here, unlike last night when the only Turkish people were the staff. Is this because it is breakfast, or because Sömine, with its formica tables, is not deemed 'restaurant' enough for non-Turkish customers?

At the root of this interpretation of field notes is perhaps a focus on 'content' rather than 'data'. I was seeing my experience within the context of the design test project from the outset, therefore my 'field notes' were constructed with a particular destination and audience in mind, rather than existing as 'raw data' which would, through analysis, enable one to construct a sustained theoretical text. Again the interpretive, editorial role of the designer/researcher relates directly to the discussion of subjectivity explored in section three, chapter six, *The place of the researcher*. As Calvino (1981) suggests 'every interpretation is the exercise of power', and neutrality has long since been revealed as a myth, whether in maps, ethnographies, or sans serif Modernist typography. So, once again, the questions I reflected on as I constructed my texts were of the pragmatic sort, relating to the final artefact and the reader—'is it interesting enough', or 'is it believable'—this type of question perhaps touches on Richardson's (2000) concern that much traditional qualitative research remains unread. Again, from my position as a designer I am not bound by social science disciplinary traditions that perhaps make it more difficult for other researchers to reinterpret methods. As a 'bricoleur' I am able to develop and adapt these

methods in the light of my own discipline and therefore my approach, in this instance, to field notes becomes one that would perhaps be better termed 'field writing'.

However, simply because the field writing was used directly as content within the *Food Miles* test project, is not to say that it escaped or resisted analysis. As I have discussed previously, further analysis and reflection is an ongoing part of the process of research and the writings were repeatedly read and analysed not only during their construction, but also during the development of the design test project. This analysis led to the inclusion of other related texts, thus building a more complex picture of place that stemmed from my experience. The inclusion of these supplementary texts parallels the development of the *Stuff* design test project and both offered an opportunity to explore the potential of experimental ethnographic writing strategies, such as montage writing, within the research. Both books engage the reader in a multi-linear narrative and in each case a central text runs through the work. In the case of *Stuff* this is a traditional essay, in *Food Miles*, the field writings. The challenge was to bring together different types of texts that reflected and refracted the central content, but without losing the central contextual thread of each test project. The strategies for ensuring this wasn't the case were executed via both editing and graphic and typographic interventions within the design. To a great extent much of the editing process relied, once again, on quite pragmatic questions of interest, credibility, or impact, the answers to which I arrived at through reflection on my own experience of graphic design practice, but a practice that is now supplemented with a greater theoretical understanding in relation to both ethnography and cultural geography. The impact of the use of montage writing—with respect to the juxtaposition of a range of interrelated, but quite different texts—on the design of the test projects will be discussed in the following chapter.

In an extension to the process of writing, many of the design test projects are linked by the use of language as a common thread. This is perhaps partly due to my enjoyment of words, and their visual, typographic representation. However, pure enjoyment is not the sole motivating factor as the decisions made with respect to the use of language and typography are all undertaken through the process of analysis and reflection. To an extent, at this stage in the design process, one could liken this to the role of an editor. Many of the test projects incorporate bold typographical

statements that function as 'hooks' for the reader, drawing them into the text, highlighting key points of analysis or interesting moments in the narrative and encouraging them to read further. For example, the content used in the *Hackney Conversations* series of prints was partly chosen because it was open to interpretation by viewers who could bring something of their own lives or understanding to the 'fragment' in order to re/construct a fuller narrative.

The content also needs to relate to people or connect with them somehow. In photography, Barthes notion of 'punctum', a photograph that contains a kind of 'charge', could be looked at as a parallel notion.

'I just don't know' works in that way—it gives off a kind of emotive charge—it is non-specific enough not to exclude and gives a hint of the emotion of despair that most people will have experienced... they can 'hook' in. It is also a fragment that enables more than a 'charge'—it encourages the reader/passers by to speculate on the scenario—what has led to this state of mind, what will happen. It is a small, contained fragment that exists in a much bigger, unseen picture (08.05.09).

Indeed, the success of this strategy was borne out by conversations I had with several visitors to *In/flux* who commented that the prints prompted them to imagine the exchange more fully in terms of the speaker or scenario. When they shared their thoughts on what this might be it was obvious they were bringing their own experience to bear on the work. This happened in particular with the 'Sorry' print (fig. 247)—the men I spoke to all made an assumption that it related to the end of a relationship, and felt sorry for the man who had been 'dumped'. In reality however, the speaker was a woman, though the context of the apology remains a mystery. Through these multiple types of texts, and the graphic and typographic interventions that bring them 'to life', the reader becomes a key participant in the journey, actively invoking the narrative in the way they wish. The design interventions proactively invoke Barthes' notion of the 'death of the author' (1977), and enable the designed artefacts to move beyond a 'fixed' presentation of place that is an anathema to the contemporary view of place as 'process'.



Fig. 247: 'Sorry': *Hackney conversations*

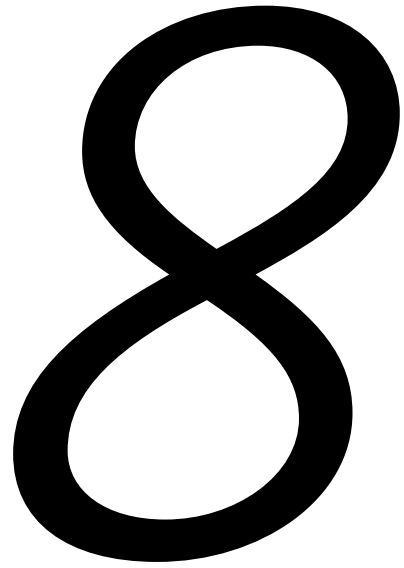
7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed a range of approaches to documenting place that, in conjunction with reflection and analysis, further develop one's understanding of place that was initially developed through the strategies of experience and participation discussed in the previous chapter. Here, photography has been revealed not only as a method of documenting place in terms of recording images, but also as a method for thinking through one's response to place by the process of that documentation. In a similar way, writing has also been used as a reflective 'tool' and one that through its relatively slow pace—like walking—enables the testing of ideas, analysis, and reflection during its construction. Mapping, in its broadest sense has also been used for documenting the spatiality of place, and as a method of analysis that can be used to visualise connections and positions within the research. One needs to deploy these tools at different times in order to capture different types of reflection.

The approach to analysis undertaken within the geo/graphic design process is one of openness and flexibility—one that is able to capitalise on serendipitous connections or chance meetings. Non-traditional research methods such as cultural probes do not provide neat sets of data that are somehow capable of 'averaging out' place. It is, therefore, useful to retain this open mindset, and to think of analysis in Seidel's (1998) broad qualitative terms of 'noticing, collecting and thinking', rather than assume that the process of analysis can only be used in a positivist, quantitative approach. The interdisciplinary nature of the geo/graphic design process sites the designer/researcher in this 'inbetween' (Cocker 2008: 1, Kincheloe 2001: 689) place, and from this position one may develop productive adaptations of so-called traditional research methods. However, to assess the productivity of these adaptations, they need to be subjected to the appropriate critical questioning.

In the spirit of this open, adaptable approach, one must also be prepared to let much of the specificity of the cultural probe returns go as part of the process of moving from information to inspiration. However, this is not to suggest this 'letting go' is a passive process. The choice of which returns to develop, within the context of the geo/graphic design process, is clearly an active one. Indeed, it is the analysis undertaken by the designer/researcher that 'activates' the cultural probes and leads some of them to make this transition between information and inspiration. Such decisions also have

an element of interpretation and an editorial role attached to them, and the designer/researcher should accept and engage with this positively rather than see it as some sort of problematic subjectivity—the process of crafting a re/presentation of place in print, that is not only believable but also engaging and interesting for the reader, should be an enjoyable one. The potential that language has to ‘open up’ the piece and invite the reader to engage with it is immense. However, their involvement in this journey isn’t just prompted by the words alone, but also by the typography and design of the specific artefacts. This process of productively interpreting the texts, images and ideas developed through the first two phases of the geo/graphic design process discussed here and in the previous chapter will now be discussed in the following chapter.



The place of design: The design of place

As I stated earlier, this separation of preliminary research, analysis and design is something of an artificial one, and the reality of the process is that it is not so neatly linear. In fact, analysis and reflection, or ‘noticing, collecting and thinking’, are absolutely central to the progression of the geo/graphic design process at this stage, and the actual process of graphic design clearly relates to a great deal of the discussion within the analysis section. However, to situate this chapter as the final one of the three that chart the development of the geo/graphic design process does make sense in that it is at the point of design when ideas developed throughout the research come to fruition in a visual form. It is, essentially, the culmination of the geo/graphic design process and is a visual and textual articulation of the product of the symbiotic relationship between content or data, theory, and graphic design practice. The following sections discuss in detail aspects of the physical artefacts created through the design test projects. Design interventions have been made throughout with an overt awareness of their communicative potential in relation to the reader. These decisions are, in a sense, a subject specific, proactive use of *subjectivity*. As a designer I am aware of the impact such rhetorical or stylistic moves can make, and therefore bring this understanding to the forefront of this phase of the geo/graphic design process.

Each section within the chapter will frame these graphic and typographic interventions within a particular context: the place of the ‘page’ as the key site of print-based graphic design (again I am using the term ‘page’ as a collective noun for the basis of all print based forms of graphic communication—from posters to books); the potential of the book as a vehicle for the re/presentation of place; the role of materials and production in the generation of a multi-sensory experience; and, the place of the reader. The analysis of these graphic and typographic interventions, and their particular contexts, will thus reveal the final elements of the geo/graphic design process.

8.1 The place of the page

For graphic designers, their relationship with the page could be said to equate to an architect’s relationship with a piece of land. However, for Ingold this analogy with land, and more importantly place and the page, is no longer appropriate. His sense is that when reading, rather than inhabiting ‘the world of the page’ (Ingold 2007: 91) the modern reader ‘surveys the page as if from a great height’ (Ingold 2007: 92). Central

to the notion of a geo/graphic design process is its potential to re/present place through print in such a way that the reader engages with it proactively, rather than gazing at it passively. To that end the design test projects engage with a range of strategies to do this. Many of them draw on Mermoz's (1995, 1998, 2002 and Mau & Mermoz 2004) ideas of working 'at the level of the text' and conceptualising 'typography as a generative structure of meanings' (Mau 2002: 1). It is this engagement with content that enables the visual work to move beyond simplistic, stylistic, visual notions of Modernism and Postmodernism, that often lead to the construction of stereotypical typographic designs of a superficial nature—either using sans serif type, asymmetric layouts, and lots of white space, or multi-layered, 'deconstructed' type.

Format and grid structure

The design of the page is crucial to the reader navigating through, and engaging with, any piece of print-based graphic design. The first design decisions taken relate to format, the grid, and use of typefaces. Although I am separating these into sections this is for the benefit of the thesis and the reader. Inevitably all these decisions are inextricably linked and need to be explored in conjunction with each other, through prototyping, before reaching a conclusion. In the case of the design test projects decisions about format were made in relation to both content and concepts, and some were also taken in relation to production. For example, the *Stuff* book explores Hackney via the contents of residents' houses; therefore the small book format, developed through prototyping, reflects this concept of a 'close up' view. The A4 folded format of the *Freecycle* book was chosen so as to enable the production of the books with recycled A4 paper, at minimum cost, and as such was a concept that was in keeping with the activities and ethos of the Freecycle organisation. Decisions regarding choice of format that related to production were also taken with the *EWG* and *Food Miles* design test projects and these will be discussed fully later in this chapter, in *The place of materials and production*.

Size of format is important as it literally changes the reader's perspective, and therefore their experience of the work and that of place. Here, the small size of the books enables the reader to hold them in the palm of their hand, thus developing a close, physical relationship with them. On interacting with the books, the readers sit themselves within their pages, both with their hands turning the pages and bringing the books close to the eyes, or

the eyes to the books. This then adds to the sense that the version of place offered here is an intimate one, that the reader is stepping inside of these particular versions of Hackney, and the research journeys undertaken to re/present them.

In contrast, the large format of the single sheet posters positions the reader more externally to the work. To view the posters one has to step back in order to take in the scale of the image and in both *Newsagents' windows* and *Hackney conversations* this adds to the sense that it is a version of place that is experienced in a slightly removed way. The use of a single sheet presents the information to the viewer in its entirety, immediately, rather than over time like the pages of the book. This both acknowledges a different type of experience of place and perhaps references Soja's (1989: 1–2) desire to develop a form of narrative that can engage with the simultaneity he finds in Borges' (1999: 274) tale of *The Aleph*. The experience of Hackney offered here could be described as fleeting, or perhaps superficial—though this is not to suggest a pejorative connotation. It is the experience one has as one moves through crowds overhearing disjointed snatches of conversation, or waits at a bus stop browsing the posters or adverts pasted on the walls or placed in shop windows. This is an experience that we will all have encountered, whether in a place we know well, or somewhere we are just visiting; it is as much part of the everyday life of place as any other type of more sustained experience developed through in depth ethnographic research.

The content of both these design test projects perhaps recalls Massey's (1994, 2005) notions of place as process; *Hackney conversations* highlights the fleeting connections and disconnections found in place; and, *Newsagents' windows* reveals the ongoing circulation of people, goods, and services within Hackney. However, the format reflects Tuan's (1977) notion of pause as it 'freeze frames' the moment that the 'data' was encountered, thus creating a momentary snapshot of Hackney. In the *Newsagents' windows* posters this 'freeze frame' effectively creates Borges' notion of simultaneity. The snippets of text used are taken directly from the advertisements photographed, and offer the viewer an indication of the type of advertisements prevalent throughout Hackney or within the main postcode areas. Freed from a linear setting, the text fills the space of

the page using a range of different sizes and, occasionally, is positioned vertically. This creates a space where the texts simultaneously compete with each other for the viewers' attention within the margins of the page.

The grids used in the design test projects range from simple, to complex and are again each dependant on the content and concepts that each particular design test project is visualising, and are developed through prototyping and testing. For example, the contents of *Stuff* book reference collections, and the notion of collections being built up piece by piece, over time, is reflected in the use of a grid of twelve columns, with each page incorporating 72 modules (fig. 248). In comparison, *Food Miles* uses a much simpler grid, with only four columns and 16 modules (fig. 249). The format and grid for the *Newsagents' windows* design test project was developed through the quantitative nature of the analysis (fig. 250). Statistics relating to the prevalence of particular types of advertisements in particular areas, and Hackney as a whole, were drawn from the data. Therefore the grid utilises 100 modules of 10 x 20 mm, each equating to one percent of the total advertisements. In contrast, the *EWG A Haptic Journey* book barely used a grid at all; the introduction uses two columns and the pages that display the images of the rubbings simply have top, bottom, and inner and outer margins, as a guide for placement.

Typographic choices and initial uses of the grid

Initial decisions also need to be made about typefaces. In the *Stuff* and *Food Miles* books, each type of text is given a different typeface in order to distinguish between them and aid with navigation. The typefaces are chosen both to complement each other visually, and to reference content and meaning. For example, *Stuff* features an academic essay that is set in *Univers* condensed, a sans serif face that shows few typographic 'flourishes' in its consistent letterforms (fig. 251). Its tone could, therefore, be said to be impersonal and it was chosen to reflect the somewhat removed academic, theoretical perspective. In contrast, the participant's life story is set in *Monotype Modern*, a serif face that, although also condensed, has strong variations between its thick and thin strokes (fig. 252). This gives it a more characterful nature and reflects the more personal experience charted in the story. The conversation is set in *ITC Century italic*, with the italics giving a sense of flow and movement to the text, emphasising the immediate nature of words exchanged in conversation (fig. 253). My voice is separated from the participant's by a change of weight, emphasising their answers



Fig. 250: Grid: Newsagents' windows



Fig. 251: Example of typeface use: **Stuff**

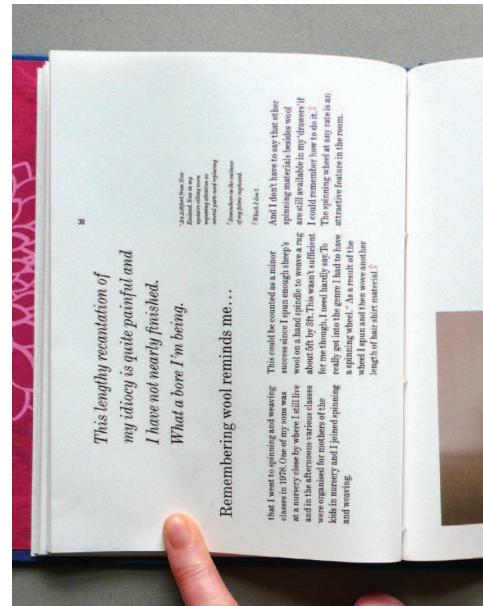


Fig. 252: Example of typeface use: **Stuff**

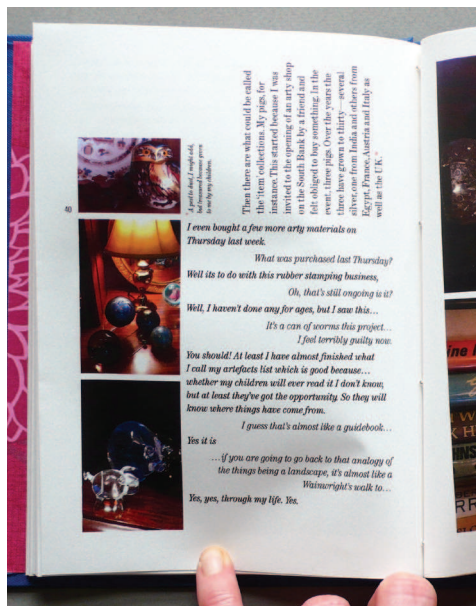


Fig. 253: Example of typeface use: **Stuff**

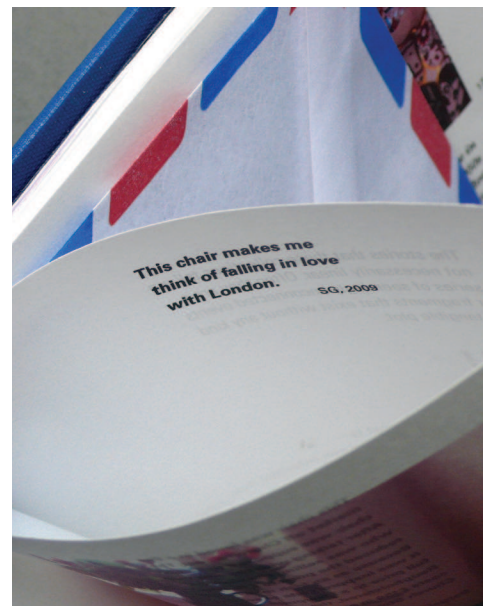


Fig. 254: Example of typeface use: **Stuff**

over my questions or interruptions. The memories triggered by the images of specific items in the participants' collections are also set in *Univers*, but in bold and bold oblique (fig. 254). These quotes function similarly to captions, and a sans serif typeface, like *Univers*, is often deployed in this way. Similar decisions are taken throughout each of the test projects and this could be said to be the first decision that relates directly to Mermoz's (1995, 1998, 2000, 2002 & Mau & Mermoz 2004) approach to typography.

The grid, through its columns and modules, provides a set of parameters within which to use the type and images on the page. The more columns and modules the grid has, the more choice the designer has over the positioning of the elements. However, the designer does not always have to be strictly bound by the grid at all times, it can be 'broken' if so required. In the range of design test projects completed, the pages of the *Stuff* book utilise the most complex grid, and its design allows the type to engage with the content and meaning through its positioning. For example, the section of the academic essay that relates to collections is set as small individual blocks of text within the modules of the grid, alongside images of a participant's ornaments (fig. 255). The text then refers to the completion of a collection and the fear a collector can experience that prompts them to redefine their task. Here the typography initially conforms to the modules of the grid, but by the end of the paragraph the small blocks of text have adopted a different system of positioning—they are turned 90° and sit slightly outside of the columns—implying the shift in the focus of the collection (fig. 256). In other examples, different heights of columns of type are used to visually reference the idea of stockpiling (fig. 257) and, in the final section of the book that relates to the significance of stuff being lost on death, the type starts to break out of the grid, even to break away from a horizontal baseline, thus implying a pile of disordered clutter rather than a meaningful collection (fig. 258).

In contrast the grid, and its use, in the *Food Miles* book is much simpler. The four-column grid was driven by a desire to use the two central columns to reflect the journey being taken up the 'spine' of Hackney.

Actually, rather than focus on the spine of the book and have weird layouts, could centre the columns of text so that it echoes the path of the road up through Hackney (29.06.10)



Fig. 255: Example of grid use: **Stuff**



Fig. 256: Example of grid use: **Stuff**



Fig. 257: Example of grid use: **Stuff**

To that end each restaurant experience is set with the establishment name, address, and food ordered centred, and the field writing text justified. The justification in particular creates a ‘solid’, road-like block of text that runs from the front to the back of the book, in the same way that the old Roman road runs through Hackney from north to south (fig. 259).

However, it is not just typeface choice and positioning that is important, but also size, weight and colour. In the *Hackney conversations* series of prints this is particularly evident, and the prints all use the typography to interpret and emphasise the content. For example, the ‘i just don’t know’ print sets the type in a small point size without using capital letters, to engender a sense that the person who uttered these words was feeling very lost and small at that moment (fig. 260); ‘Allah’ sets the type in silver and gold, referencing money and breaks up the text with a small five-pointed star, which is said to represent the five pillars of Islam (fig. 261); and, the ‘Easter’ print sets the type both range right and range left in order to separate the two speakers, the colours used are a vivid green and crimson, referencing the new growth of spring and the colour of religious vestments, and the ornamental borders used also reference spring and new plant growth (figs. 262–263).

The design and typographic choices position the page as a liminal space, as a threshold between the reader and their engagement and understanding. Perec (1997: 13) has stated that ‘this is how space begins, with words only, signs traced on a blank page’. The page is not, in a traditional sense, a physical place, but it can act as a gateway to place in the mind, and it is the possibilities offered by a holistic approach to typography, content and form that can open up such a space. In the designer’s hand, typography can become ‘a generative structure of meanings’ (Mermoz 2001: 1) and the page, therefore, the threshold between words and the imagination. This is regardless as to whether the typography has been executed by hand, through digital means or by using letterpress. It is the fusing of the pairs type and page, and form and content, that is key to engaging the reader in an active rather than passive way, not the link between the hand and the page as suggested by Ingold (2007).

Essentially, the design decisions referred to in this section all hinge on this development of a productive relationship between form and content. A process of analysis and reflection undertaken during the graphic design practice, that does not privilege one over the other, enables one to not only

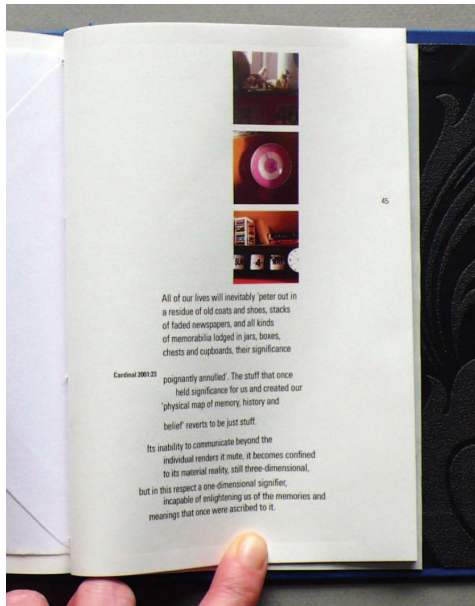


Fig. 258: Example of grid use: **Stuff**

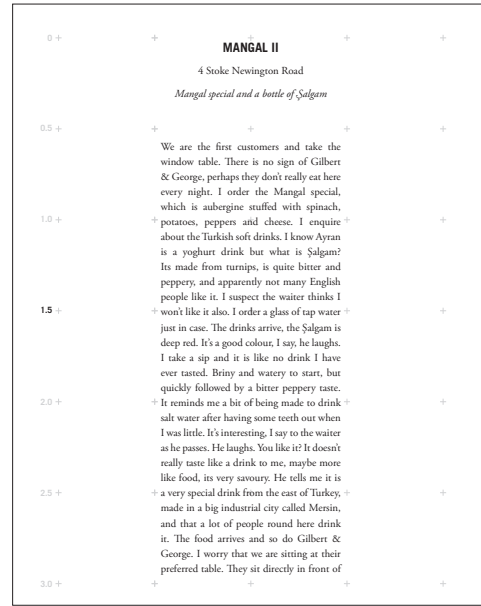


Fig. 259: Example of grid use: **Food miles**

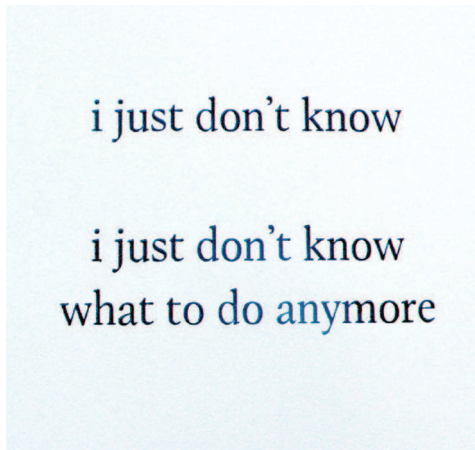


Fig. 260: Example of typography use 'i just don't know': **Hackney conversations**



Fig. 261: Example of typography use 'Allah': **Hackney conversations**



Figs. 262-263: Example of typography use 'Easter': **Hackney conversations**

develop visual work that reflects the content in some way, but also aids in communicating with, and engaging, the reader. This process of analysis and reflection is undertaken through the prototyping process. Design decisions are developed from the content analysis, applied in practice through prototyping, and then reflected on. This reflection may then lead to further design decisions that are acted on and reflected upon once again. This iterative process continues, sometimes taking steps forwards if decisions are seen to offer an improvement, or backwards, if the prototype reveals an error of judgement. The process is complete when no further productive insights are available at the point of analysis and reflection—essentially when the ‘data’, in this case the content and prototypes, has been ‘mined’ to its fullest extent. Although this process sounds smooth in its trajectory, as Berridge (2008: 5) has noted, this is not always the case.

In the real world, the process may encompass jumps and starts, complete revisions, or being stuck.

Indeed the *Newsagents’ windows* design test project was a particular case in point, as its process evidences jumps, revisions and being stuck. Whilst this kind of stop-start progress is to be expected, it can be challenging. However, it is reflection that it is the key to identifying and moving past each particular hurdle. During the early stages of analysis of the advertisements, reflection in my sketchbook clearly identifies unease that the design test project is not progressing as well as I think it could.

I think that there is something wrong with this design project/ aspect of the research. I don’t feel engaged with it—I feel that at present it is taking a purely quantitative route, which is hardly getting away from the ‘skeletal landscape of statistics’ (Crang 1998: 43)

It is lacking a richness, a narrative, essentially I suspect what is missing are voices/people. It is the people and their passions/ foibles/whatever that breathe ‘life’ into the *Stuff* and *Freecycle* projects (14.05.10).

Clearly just having completed *Stuff* and *Freecycle*, I was attempting to flesh out similar narratives with this work, forgetting that I had suggested the three projects as each offering a different version of place, changing from micro to macro, private to public. For example, the advertisements are far less personal than the messages sent out via Freecycle. They are

matter of fact, with even the rooms for rent giving little sense of the person who is advertising, and therefore little in the way of personal narrative to pick up on. They remain adverts for unknown passers by as opposed to the message a Freecycler sends to the group they belong to. As the advertisements were not analysed over time, neither was there an overall narrative of changes and fluctuations evident. A few days later this started to become more apparent to me.

If it is all about the 'moment', then is there a danger that the reader won't really get much from the work (19.05.10).

I'm just not sure there I have enough 'meat on the bones' to give some kind of narrative structure (20.05.10).

However, although I mention the idea of the 'moment' in the post on 19 May, what I was still not clearly focusing on was that what I was dealing with was simply a different view of Hackney; the representation of a different aspect of place, one that was more fleeting and momentary. So I continued looking at the types of things advertised; whether they related to areas of Hackney in any way; were the advertisements handwritten or done on a PC; or, what kind of language did people use to advertise their stuff. I did discover certain types of advertisements had visual traits. The majority of rooms for rent (75%) were handwritten advertisements mostly using black biro, and massage advertisements were mostly handwritten (87.5%), often using marker pens. I did discover that there were seven times as many rooms for rent advertisements as there were 'man and van' advertisements—clearly a man with a van will never be out of work in Hackney. These discoveries remained predominantly quantitative in nature and perhaps because of this I began to attempt to develop pieces of information design (figs. 264–265) in an attempt to solve my problem. However, I knew these weren't developing in a productive way.

All this info graphics stuff looks colourful and funky, but I'm still not sure it works for the project. Why has it gone like this... because it has developed in such a quantitative way, but why else? I think it is all getting overcomplicated and there is no clear reason for the style/materials used. Maybe just a pack of cards stating the facts, in the appropriate media is a simpler, clearer and more fitting solution? (22.05.10)

So, I began to use envelopes and postcards to print out examples of the advertisements alongside the information graphics that revealed statistics about types of advertisements and areas (figs. 266–267). However, I still hadn't fully realised that I was resisting dealing with the momentary. It was only through prototyping the cards and handling them, I realised this was the case, becoming aware that I was essentially attempting to insert some kind of narrative into the work and design them as pages of a book, with a story unfolding about Hackney. However, this isn't the experience one has when gazing at such advertisements in a window. Finally it dawned on me that I could work with the idea of a 'moment' in a productive way, as I had done with the *Hackney conversations* posters. However, this epiphany didn't come through reflection within the sketchbook, but whilst discussing the work at a supervision. Here, by moving the conversation about the design practice from 'private to public', what I had unconsciously been aware of in relation to the momentary view of place became conscious (McIntosh 2010: 47). From that point I developed the series of posters using statements and language from the advertisements themselves within a grid that revealed a sense of the prevalence of each type of advertisement. Although still retaining a quantitative essence, the fact that language is the vehicle for showing this, rather than pie charts, does give the posters a more 'peopled' feel. This circuitous journey is finally understood and captured in my blog post at the culmination of this particular design test project.

So the travails of the project have revealed things worth writing about. Also, perhaps I need to ask myself what is wrong with superficiality? It is one view of place, and a view that one would get if one just passes by ads like these. The engagement with them, unless, for example, you are looking for a room, is superficial. You are likely to just vaguely read them if waiting for a bus, or waiting to meet a friend. There is also a danger that to keep suggesting one should go beyond such representations to a 'deeper' representation of place implies that there is a 'truth' that can be found, when clearly place is a multi-faceted, polyphonic entity. If I had wanted to generate a more clearly 'peopled' project, then perhaps I should have contacted those who were advertising items and then I could have explored a more personal story of shared houses, dog breeding, and carpenters for hire or perhaps a more political story of women caught up in the sex trade.

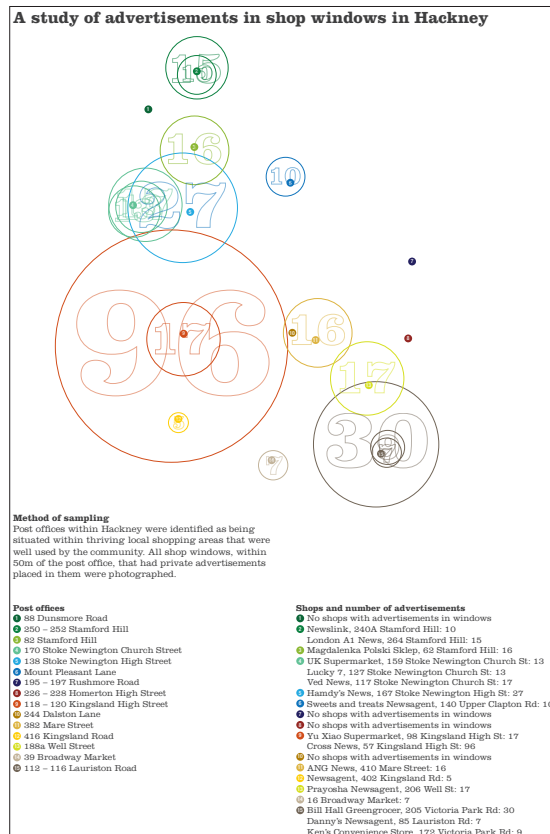


Fig. 264: Example of *Newsagents' windows* prototype

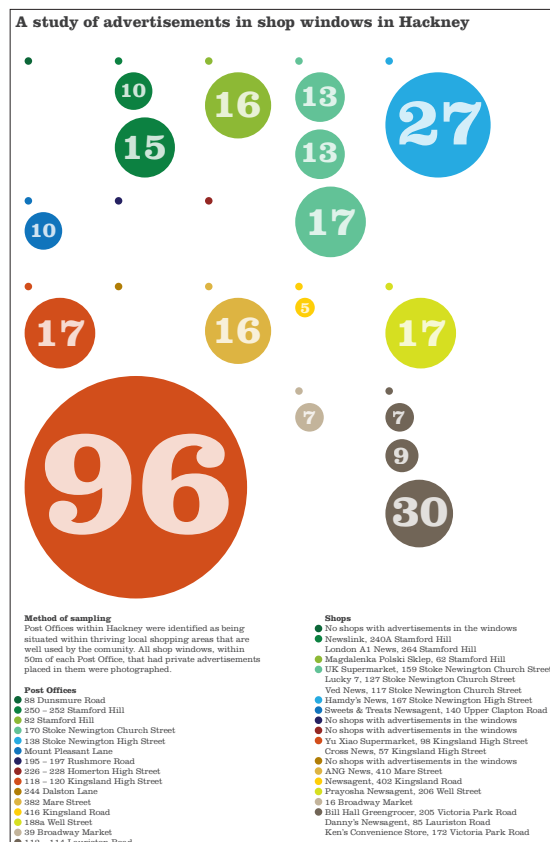


Fig. 265: Example of *Newsagents' windows* prototype

8.1 The place of the page



Fig. 266: Example of **Newsagents' windows** prototype

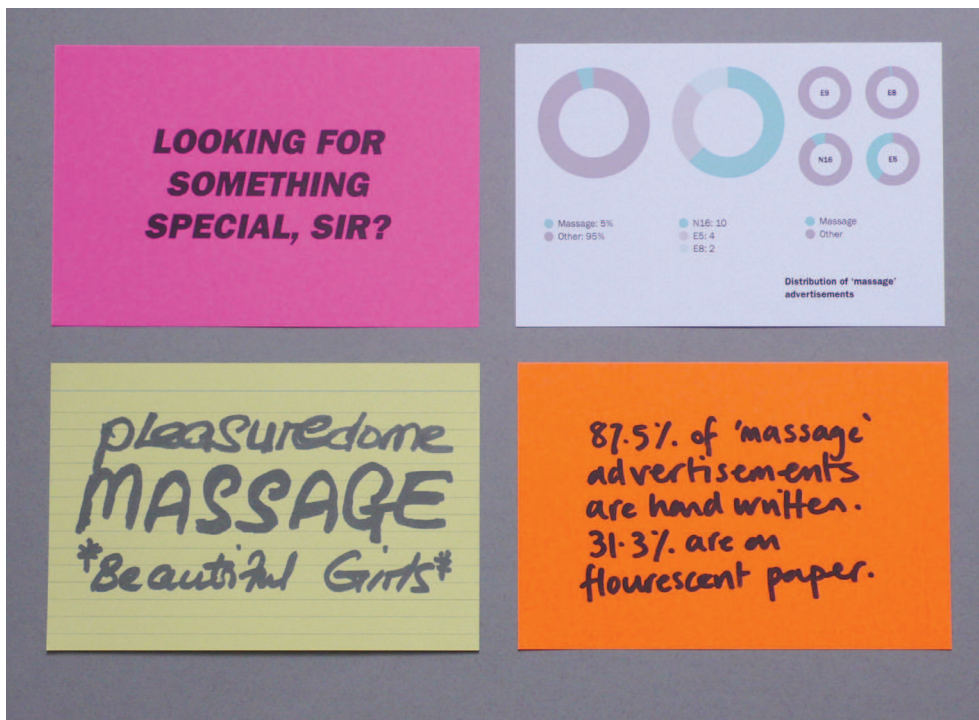


Fig. 267: Example of **Newsagents' windows** prototype

Not only did time preclude this, but I had also set this project out in contrast to the personal explorations of the *Stuff* book. It was always to be the last of the trilogy, a less close up view. Perhaps its not surprising then, that what I have generated seems relatively impersonal (28.06.10).

Up till now the discussion has focused on the ‘page’ in isolation, yet many of the design test projects are books and therefore, multi-page documents, and the following section centres on this shift from the design of an individual page to the design of the book.

8.2 Place as book

The book offers an opportunity to explore the notions of both ‘process’ and ‘pause’ through the one format. A book is a temporal space and can be seen as a ‘time-space continuum’ (Carrion 2001, see also Hochuli 1996 and Mau 2000), as can film, but unlike film, instead of remaining powerless, outside the frame of action, the reader is in control of the action unfolding. Pages can be turned quickly or slowly, or the reader can choose to stop for an extended period at a single spread. It is design that is able to create the sense of this possibility and the conditions for this to happen.

As Drucker states

The book is a dynamic interface, a structured set of codes for using and accessing information and navigating the experience of a work. Books are immersive, absorptive, complex (Drucker 2004: vii).

The three design test projects discussed in this section—*Stuff*, *Freecycle*, and *Food Miles*—all use the form of the book in productive ways. The design interventions undertaken relate to the use of the grid and systems of ‘navigation’, and the texts used within the *Stuff* and *Food Miles* books also offer an opportunity to explore the impact of ‘montage writing’ on the design process. *Stuff* also offers an opportunity to engage in a more sustained way with Mermoz’s (1995, 1998, 2000, 2002 & Mau & Mermoz 2004) ideas as the two main texts are of a reasonably substantial length. All design interventions have been made, once again, through the process of analysis and reflection, and by way of prototyping, as discussed above.

Both *Stuff* and *Food Miles* draw together a range of texts in order to re/present place as an ongoing, socially constructed, intertextual site of meaning. The texts in *Food Miles* in particular, draw in contextual information about the development of different communities within Hackney, and some of their particular customs and beliefs. However, this relatively simple idea needs to be designed in such a way so as to not completely disorient the reader within the pages of the book, and ultimately produce ‘a confused presentation rather than a presentation of confusion’ (Benjamin in Cook & Crang 2007). In both books a range of approaches assist with this ‘navigation’. As I discussed earlier, one of the first decisions with ramifications here is the choice of typefaces, and for ease of identification, the different sections in both books were given different typefaces. Further decisions were then taken to enable navigation within these different sections. For example, the academic essay in *Stuff* used a range of type sizes and weights to create a hierarchy within the text—title, introduction, subtitles, quotations, references and body copy—this enables the reader to follow the development of the essay across the pages of the book in a traditional, linear way (figs. 268–269).

In both *Stuff* and *Food Miles*, the reader’s physical engagement with the book is also used to delineate between different sections. In *Stuff* the participant’s life story uses the grid at a 90° angle (fig. 270), as do the supplementary texts in *Food Miles* (fig. 271), thus the reader is required to turn the book 90° to read these texts. The intent is for the physical act to suggest that they are literally moving away from the other texts and having to re-orient themselves through this new information—perhaps like turning a map round, so it is pointing in the same way one is going, in order to assist with locating oneself in space and follow directions.

Food Miles also incorporates three different numbering systems, with each enabling a differently directed reading. Firstly, the pages are numbered in traditional, linear fashion at the foot of each page, and through this reading the narrative unfolds via the order I visited each café or restaurant. Secondly, down the left hand side of each verso page there is a ‘scale’—from 0 to 3—that relates to the distance (in miles) from the start of Kingsland Road to the Stamford Hill junction with Amhurst Park and Clapton Common. The numbers on the scale are printed in a light tint of grey, and the position of the grocery shop, café, or restaurant, in relation to the start of Kingsland Road, is denoted by a number printed in a solid black



Fig. 268: Example of typographic hierarchy: **Stuff**

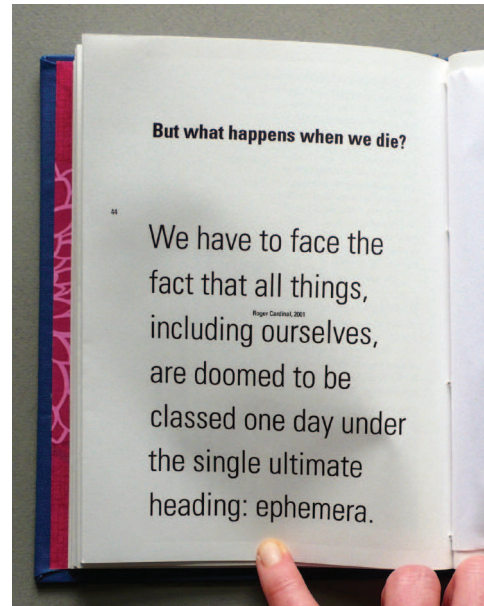


Fig. 269: Example of typographic hierarchy: **Stuff**

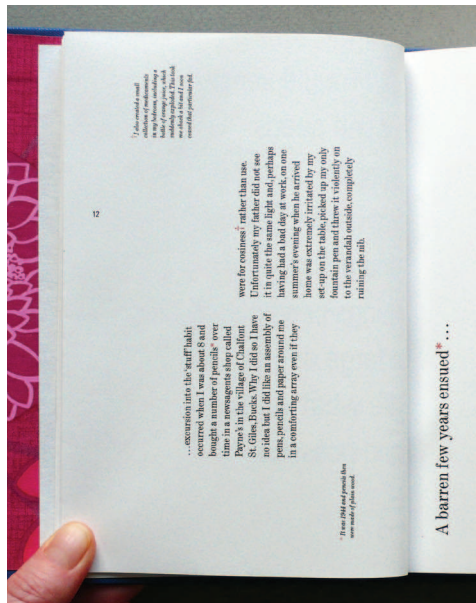


Fig. 270: Example of grid use: **Stuff**



Fig. 271: Example of grid use: **Food Miles**



Fig. 272: Example of page numbering system:
Food Miles

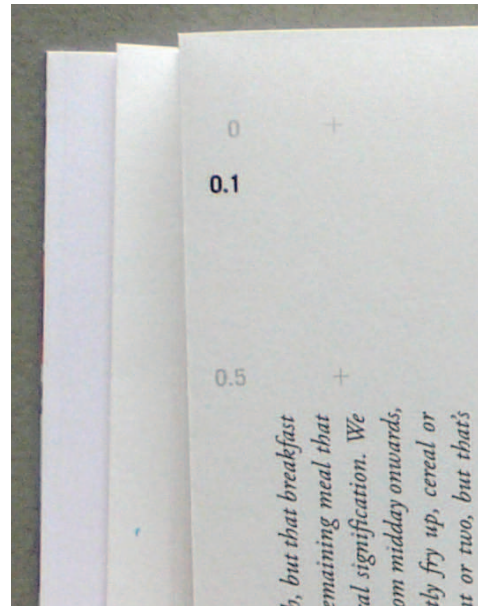


Fig. 273: Example of page numbering system:
Food Miles



Fig. 274: Example of page numbering system:
Food Miles



Fig. 275: Example of page numbering system:
Food Miles

(figs. 272–273). Thirdly, down the right hand side of each recto page there is a ‘scale’—from 0 to 6—that relates to distance from London, in relation to the food or drink’s country of origin, in thousands of miles. Again the scale is printed in grey and the distance from London is printed in black (figs. 274–275). The second two readings offer a more ‘spatial’ reading of place, and as with the process of mapping used in the research for *Food Miles*, the use of scale re-appropriates another traditional geographic element. The small crosses that cover the pages at regular intervals can also be read as a form of grid or graticule, and as Cosgrove (1999: 10) has noted, such abstract elements ‘secure a consistent scientific connection between sign and signified (map and territory)’. So, by using elements that are ‘maplike’, a further connection to place is made in the mind of the reader.

On reading the participant’s life story used in *Stuff*, I realised it was written in such a way as to include several, often self-deprecatory, asides. Not absolutely central to the story, but key to getting a sense of the participant’s tone of voice and sense of humour, I began to develop a system to use these asides in a way that visually references a scribe’s ‘gloss’ to a manuscript text.

Could add the bit about pencils being made of wood somewhere else—a footnote, an addendum. It seems to indicate a kind of attention to detail—the sentence wasn’t really needed, but she felt it was (20.10.09).

The system explores and challenges Ingold’s (2007) thinking about the medieval and mechanically printed page and uses glyphs such as *, †, ‡, and § to indicate the point in the text that related to the particular aside. Unlike the present day footnote system that gathers all the relevant notes together at the foot of the page or the end of the chapter, here the asides are positioned throughout each page (figs. 276–279). This requires the reader to ‘travel’ the page in order to link the two symbols together.

These positional strategies challenge the traditional reading pattern of the eye in printed matter designed for the western world. Usually one engages with a page in the top left hand corner, the eye then tracks to the right hand corner, then down from there in a curve to the bottom left hand corner and finally coming to rest on the bottom right hand corner—a movement that is sometimes called a ‘lazy z pattern’. Much printed media is designed to maximise this. However, these books, and in particular *Stuff*,

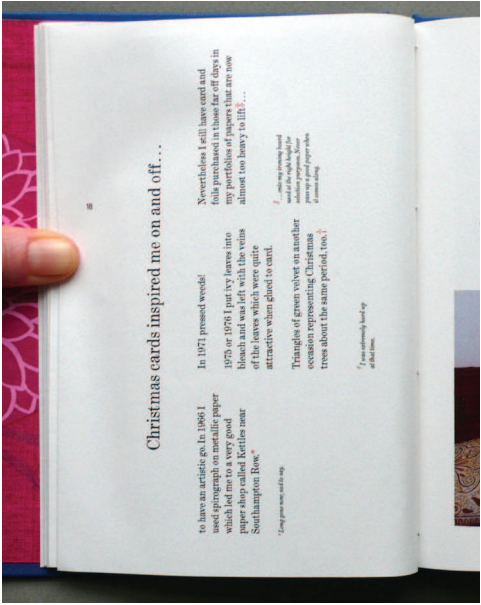


Fig. 276: Example of footnote system: **Stuff**

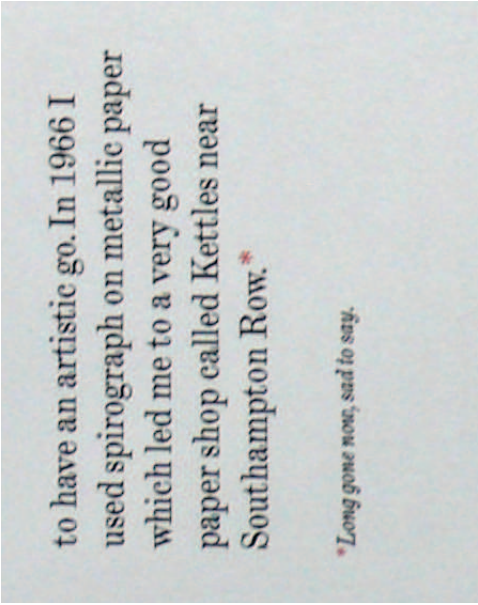


Fig. 277: Example of footnote system: **Stuff**

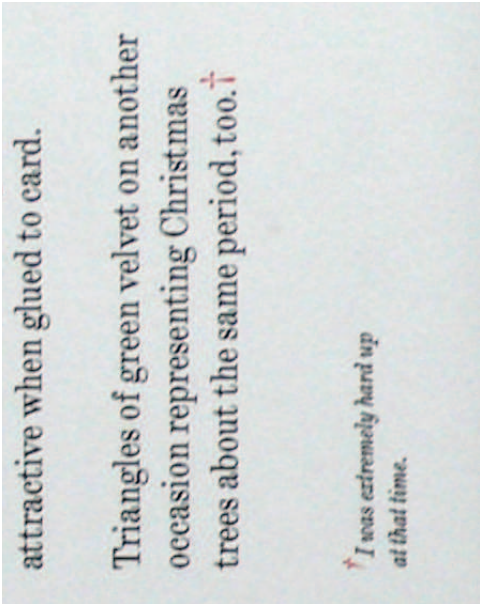


Fig. 278: Example of footnote system: **Stuff**

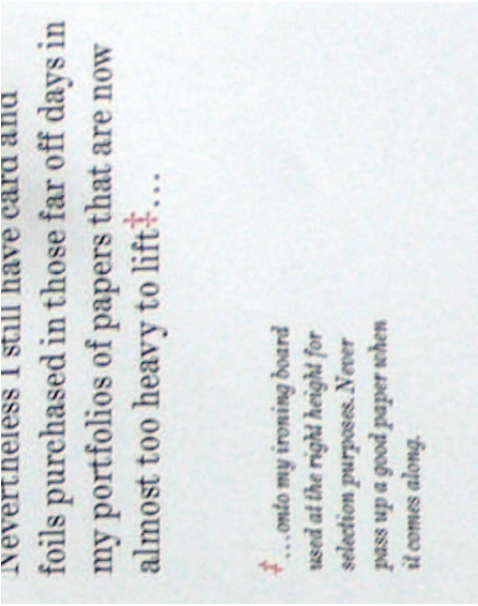


Fig. 279: Example of footnote system: **Stuff**

don't conform to this reading pattern, therefore the reader has to actively seek out the journey they wish to take across the page, but also through the book—the books are designed to facilitate multiple ways of reading. People will engage with these books in different ways—some will read the pages in a traditional linear fashion, but others will digest them text by text, and others still will dip in and out, reading the things that interest them most. Here the potential for diverse engagement relates to Kitchen & Dodge's (2007) 'mappings' and Del Casino & Hanna's (2006) ideas of map production and consumption as the books can be read differently, and therefore can tell a slightly different story, each time they are engaged with.

Alongside these specific interventions, the design of the books also engages with notions of pace and rhythm. Again, often stemming from the content, this pacing of the book is perhaps akin to the director making a final cut of a film. Stitching scenes together, or in this case spreads, in order to develop a piece that, through the pacing, engenders a fuller engagement with the content. It is the utilisation of elements such as scale and contrast—in relation to images, typography and, as a result, 'white space'—that are crucial here. For example, *Food Miles* develops a repetitive rhythm through the constant presence of the central justified column of text on each spread that emulates my continuing journey along the road. However, this underlying rhythm is developed and added to through the use of images. Often single images sit within the same column as the field writing, and are read in a linear fashion as part of the text. At other times, images are used in columns either side of the text, or in a large format across the whole text area of the page (figs. 280–283). The large images in particular create a 'pause' within the spread and, therefore, the book as a whole. The reader is invited to momentarily depart from the reading of the text, to study the images and to use them to reflect on the text. The images also help bring the text to life and enable the reader to imagine oneself in the place of the researcher—eating or drinking the foods shown, or sitting at the table from which the photograph has been taken.

In *Stuff* a similar process is at work, only here extended 'captions' that relate to the participants' acquisition of the item and the specific memories it triggers are hidden within the french fold, behind the image they refer to. By positioning the captions in this way the reader only sees a china blue cat at first, with no sense of why it is meaningful, and what significant



Fig. 280: Example of 'pace': Food Miles

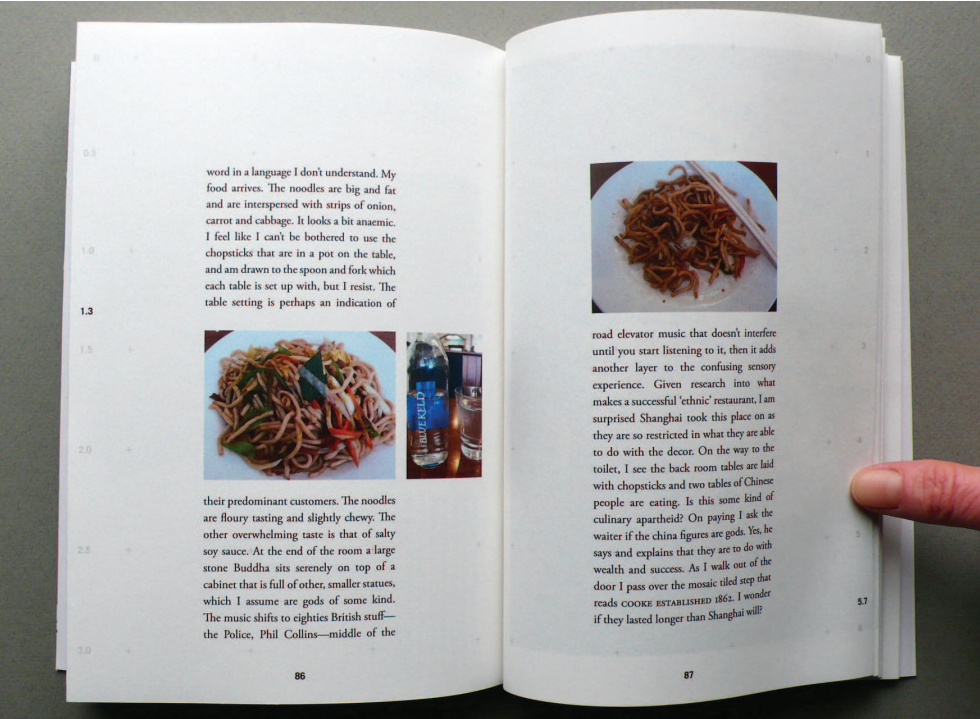


Fig. 281: Example of 'pace': Food Miles

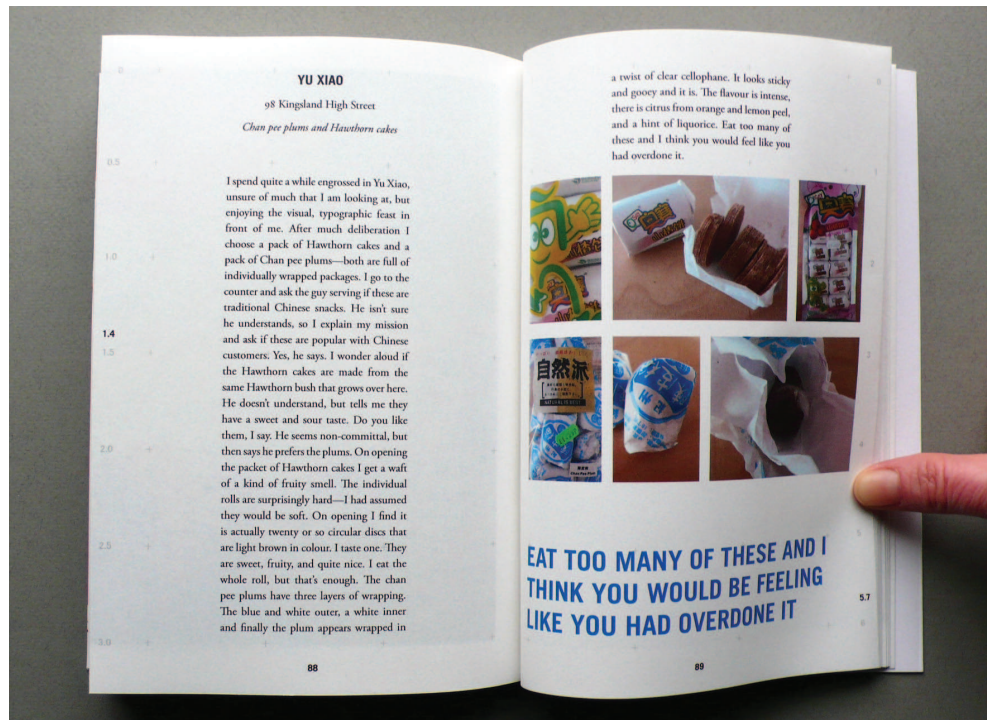


Fig. 282: Example of 'pace': **Food Miles**



Fig. 283: Example of 'pace': **Food Miles**

memories might be associated with it. However, by going beyond the face value of the image, by literally looking beyond the surface of the page and discovering the captions, the blue china cat becomes a gateway to a particular afternoon during a summer holiday in France (fig. 284–285).

So, there are two different aspects of temporality being triggered by the design interventions within the pages of *Stuff*. Firstly, one that unfolds through physical interaction as the pages of the book are turned by the reader, and secondly, one that unfolds within the reader's mind as they pause and reflect on items of their own that trigger similar memories. Within the body of the book, the two are inextricably linked; through having to seek out captions behind images it is the design interventions that facilitate the initial physical pause in the turning of the pages, this then triggers the second phase of temporality for the reader.

Throughout *Stuff* the interrelation of the different elements also played a central part in the development of the book as a whole. For example, the quote from Eco (1986)—‘Remembering is like constructing and then travelling again through a space’—is used opposite the photograph of a participant's chair that reminds them of falling in love with London (fig. 286); the statement within the participant's life story that ‘a barren few years ensued’ is left as a solitary half sentence, which is not completed for another two pages (figs. 287–288); and, within the two lines of the academic essay that suggest a viewer might attempt to construct a narrative from a collection of possessions that isn't their own sits the opening of a conversation with a participant in which I speculate (partly incorrectly) on the acquisition of some china which then leads, on the facing page, to the participant's reply (figs. 289–290). In *Food Miles* this interrelation of texts is also used productively within the design, taking the reader on a journey through Hackney. For example, at times the supplementary texts about the particular communities or customs, triggered by the field writing, spread across several pages and begin to interact with field writing and further texts that relate to members of other communities (figs. 291–292).

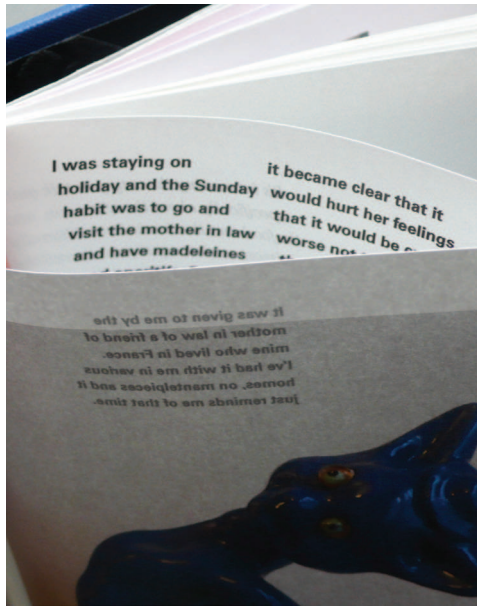


Fig. 284: Example of image/text juxtaposition: **Stuff**



Fig. 285: Example of image/text juxtaposition: **Stuff**



Fig. 286: Example of image/text juxtaposition: **Stuff**

8.2 Place as book

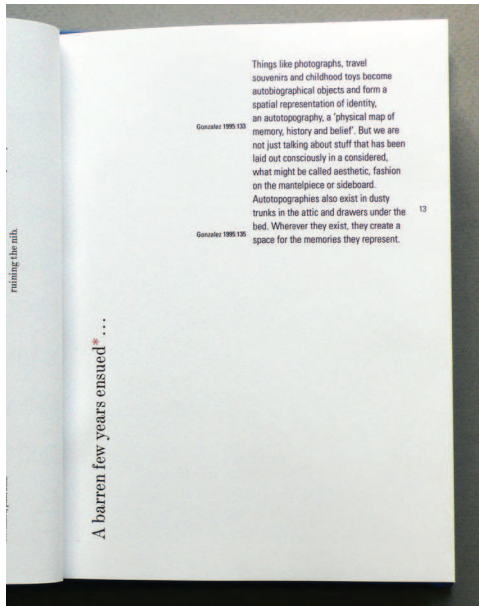


Fig. 287: Example of grid and typography use: **Stuff**

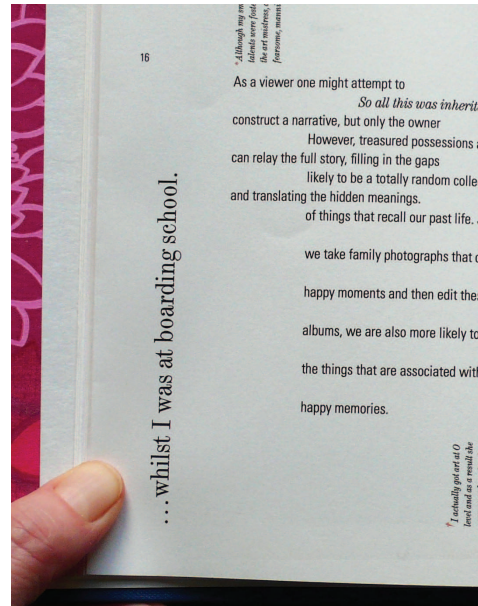


Fig. 288: Example of grid and typography use: **Stuff**

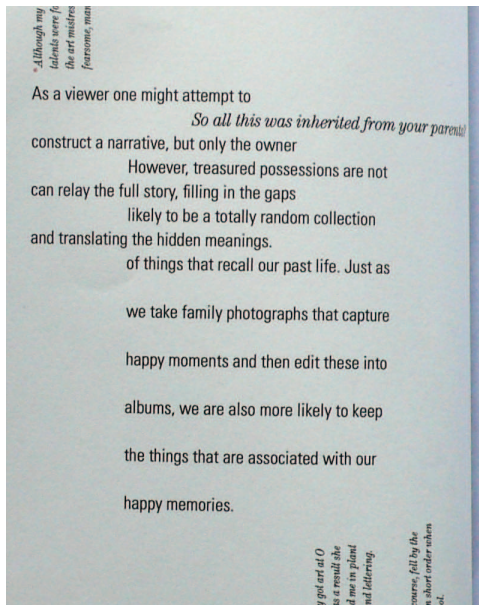


Fig. 289: Example of grid and typography use: **Stuff**

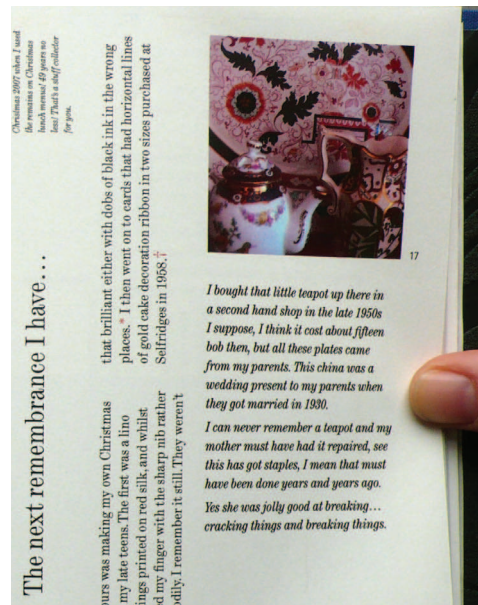


Fig. 290: Example of grid and typography use: **Stuff**

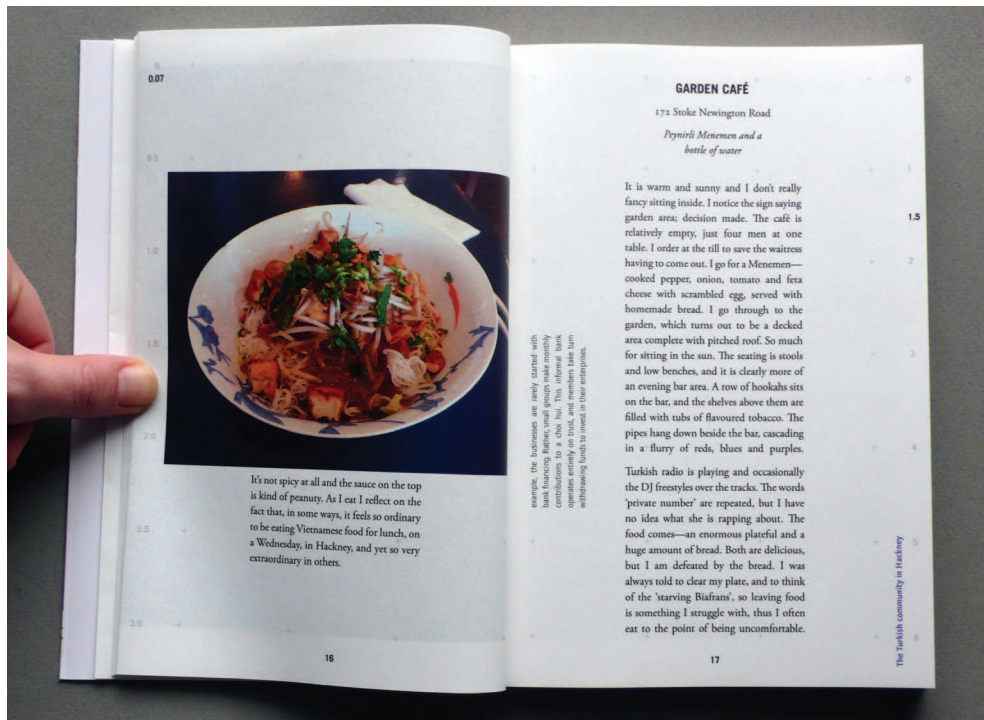


Fig. 291: Example of grid and typography use: **Food Miles**



Fig. 292: Example of grid and typography use: **Food Miles**

Running the contextual text outside of the set columns and into the margins, and if it needs to, have it cutting across or through other field notes. This maybe implies a crossing of borders—porosity—open space—Massey. It also means that sometimes, for example, a text about Vietnamese settlers is crossing a text about Turkish food—this seems to fit the experience of Hackney. Although the road could be said to be quite delineated in parts, the reality is that people and customers—the ongoing social relations—are not fixed (30.06.10).

This not only reflects the nature of place itself, where borders of any kind are always porous and artificially constructed, but it also reflects the nature of Hackney as a place where migrant communities arrived as transitory residents, then stayed and settled, and one where ‘diversity has been accompanied by tolerance and community cohesion’ (‘Hackney: The place—diversity and cohesion’ 2010: np). In contrast, one of the concepts for *Freecycle* was for pages to echo the systematic, relentless nature of the emails, with each page adding to the build up of the content through the course of the book, creating something of a constant tone or tempo throughout the book.

I am going to try quite a minimal, systematic, ‘modernist’ design first—maybe the modernist ethos suits Freecycle—trying to make the world a better place, curbing excess, etc. Also Freecycle is a kind of system itself (16.02.10).

The typeface chosen is once again *Univers* and the subject line of each message is highlighted in bold so that a reader scanning the page immediately sees a procession of messages stating ‘offered’ or ‘wanted’. A four-column grid is used for the messages, with the text running over two columns, thus the position rarely changes (figs. 293–294). However, even though the Hackney Freecycle group is so active, it is still possible to identify patterns. For example, throughout the course of the book some messages appear in orange and blue, referencing temporality through the passing of the seasons, which is evident through certain types of postings.

Seasonal posts could introduce colour and flow across the bottom of some of the spreads to show the passing of time? This would at least give some kind of continuum amongst all the randomness (21.02.10)

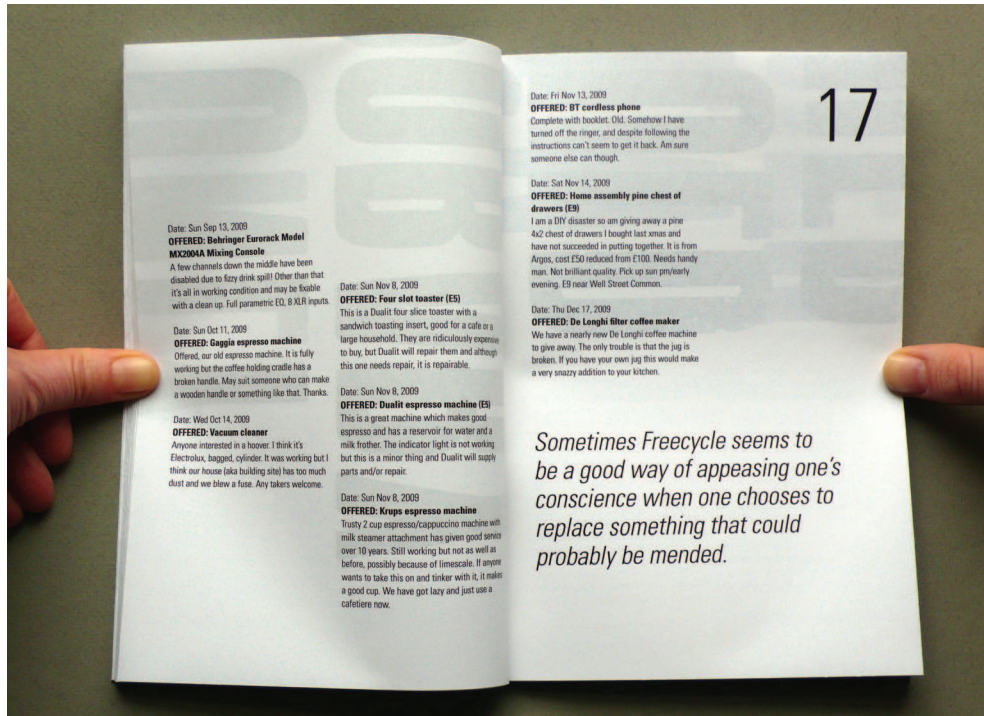


Fig. 293: Example of grid and typography use: *Freecycle*



Fig. 294: Example of grid and typography use: *Freecycle*

Patterns in terms of prevalence of types of posts were also analysed in relation to their qualitative nature. For example, in terms of brands being stated I identified a large number of Ikea items offered, especially in relation to furniture, and in relation to offers of broken, but ‘mendable’, items in N16.

The fact that so many Ikea items are for offer implies things from Ikea are some kind of temporary solution—either in terms of style and redecorating or in terms of an initial purchase to get a home started on a limited budget, before moving to better quality/more expensive stuff (14.02.10).

Going through the ‘data’ in a more content driven, qualitative way I notice more aspects worth highlighting—for example, Freecycle offers a way to appease one’s conscience when getting rid of stuff that could be mended—in a way this is a kind of anti-Freecycling Freecycling—stuff that doesn’t need to be replaced is being offered and something else bought to replace it (20.02.10).

These types of insights led directly to the development of a series of statements, such as ‘Ikea is only a temporary solution’ and ‘When you really want something you don’t mind how far you go to get it’ that are set in capitals on single pages throughout the book, thus changing its pace and affecting something of a pause for reflection (figs. 295–296).

Both *Stuff* and *Food Miles* adopt what could be considered, in ethnographic terms, a strategy of ‘montage writing’ in order to reflect the complex nature of place. The challenge in design terms with this type of material is both an editorial and a visual one. Firstly, the content needs to be analysed as a whole in order to develop an understanding of how the elements relate to each other, or how they are different. An understanding of the relationship between the texts will enable the development of a visual strategy for their deployment—both in terms of the book as a whole and as individual texts within the book. For example, in *Food Miles*, the field writing was identified as the primary text, as it was the experience contained within this writing that generated the two further types of texts. Here the design reflects this hierarchy, with the field writing text conforming to the grid and the conventions of book and being ever present throughout each spread. The other texts are situated perpendicular to the field writing, literally ‘stemming’ from it in terms of their placement. They do not conform



Fig. 295: Example of qualitative statements: **Freecycle**

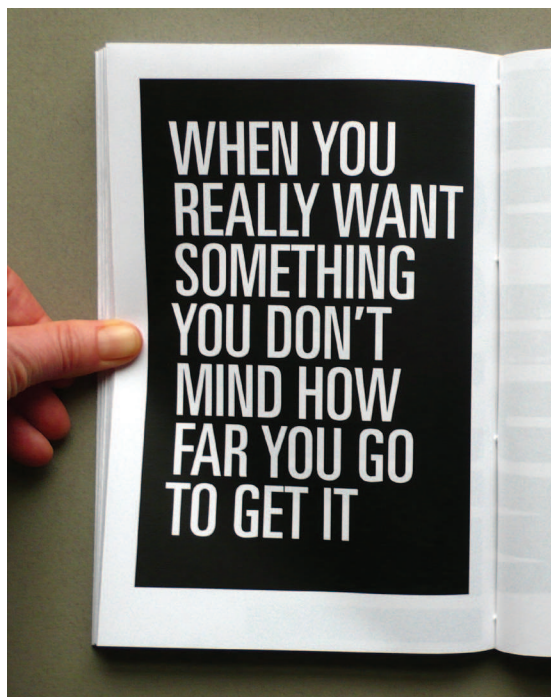


Fig. 296: Example of qualitative statements: **Freecycle**

to the conventional nature of the page, nor do they conform to the grid completely. They also do not feature on every spread—these interventions suggest a tangential shift from the primary content, but a clear connection.

Similarly, *Stuff* contains two main texts—the essay and the life story—but here the relationship is perhaps less one of primary and secondary standing, and more one between the theory and practice of collecting. Here the two texts rarely interact on the same page, but flow throughout the book either situated on opposite pages within a spread, or on separate spreads altogether (figs. 297–298). There is therefore less of a sense that they are inextricably linked, and more of a sense that they are running in parallel. Montage writing, because of its fragmentary, non-seamless nature, gives the designer/researcher an opportunity to look beyond a linear format that is the expected norm within the production of ethnographic or geographic academic texts, both in terms of the construction of the text itself and its layout. The combination of different texts immediately offers the opportunity to explore distinctions in content, and navigational tactics, through typeface choice and layout. These interventions automatically begin to contribute to the development of a page that is rich in visual and typographic ‘texture’, like place itself. However, breaking out of a conventional format also means widening one’s parameters, and often too much choice can be confusing and lead to texts that are constructed with so many diverse elements in relation to typeface choice and layout, that one sees only the separate entities rather than seeing the whole through the montage of the separate elements. This will be discussed further shortly, in relation to the design of the *Stuff* book and the application of Mermoz’s (1995, 1998, 2000, 2002 & Mau & Mermoz 2004) typographic theories.

So, rather than see navigation just as an aid for a passive reader, it can be used in a more creative way to construct a journey that enables a personal exploration of the book. In relation to place this is perhaps the difference between sitting on the top deck of a tour bus that follows a prescribed route, and setting out alone with a good pair of walking shoes. In this sense the books become interactive, and with the reader at the heart of the process, they offer up multiple re/presentations within the one format, much like Del Casino & Hanna’s (2006) description of the map offering ‘a new (re)presentation’ each time it is used, or Pearson & Shanks’ (2001: 59) ‘incorporations’—site reports that ‘leave space for the imagination

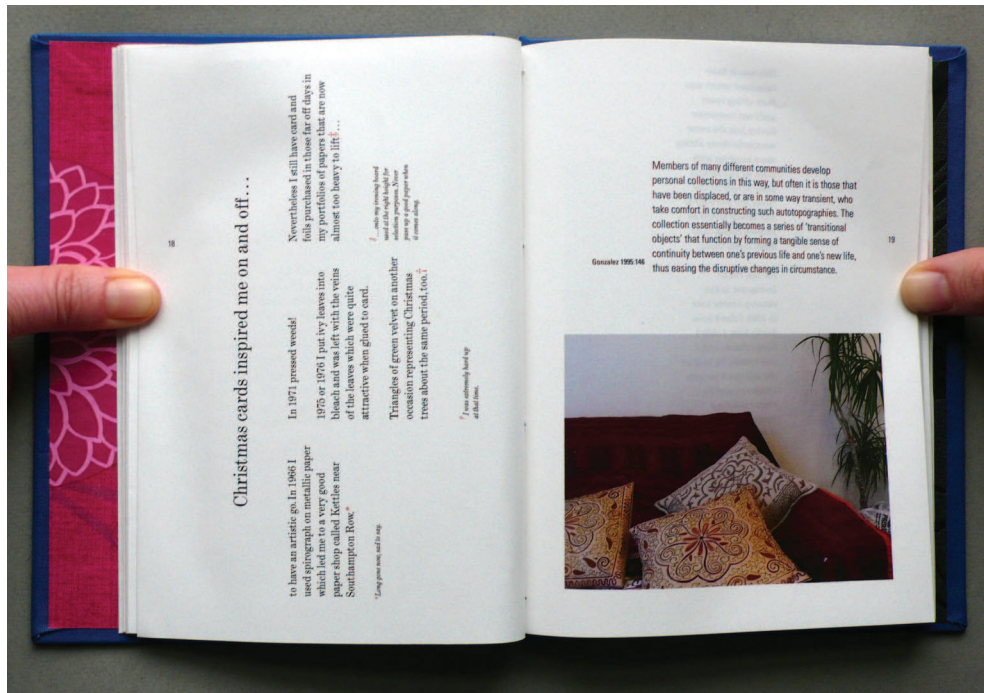


Fig. 297: Example of grid and typography use: **Stuff**

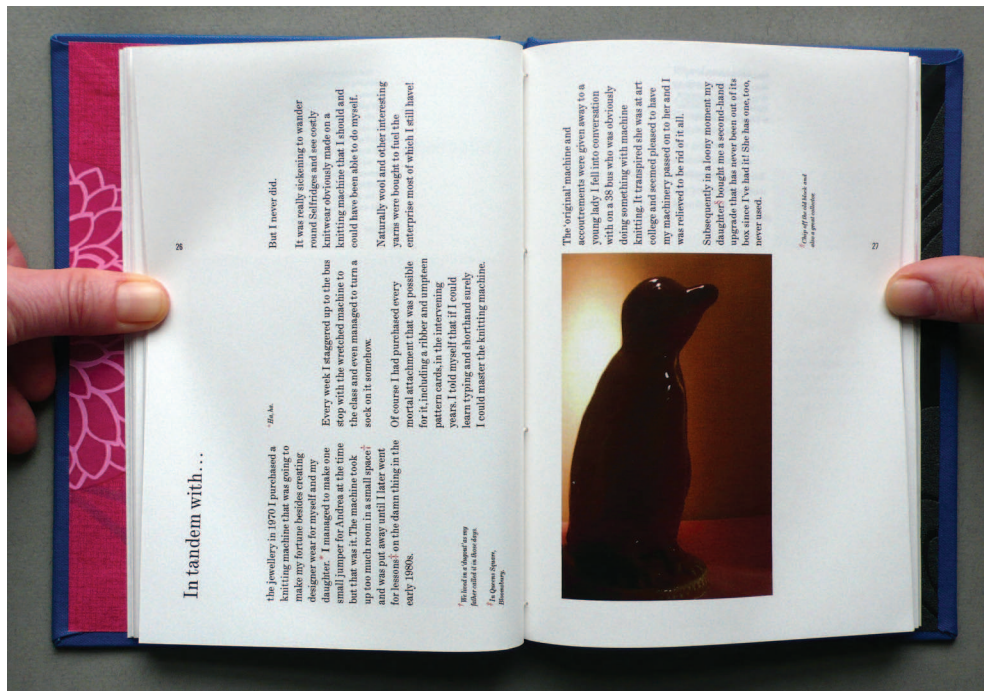


Fig. 298: Example of grid and typography use: **Stuff**

of the reader'. Once again the key to this approach is analysis of the content and context of the test project, followed by the application of this understanding of content to the development of ideas about form and structure. This approach would suggest that, contrary to Ingold's (2007) thinking, not only is the page still capable of performing as 'place', but the designer's 'voice' is also present. This may not be through hand rendered glosses to the text, but both the editorial and design decisions taken through this process of analysis are, I would suggest, a way of designing with content that engages the reader within the construction of the story throughout the pages of the book.

With regard to Mermoz's (1995, 1998, 2002 & Mau & Mermoz 2004) discussion in relation to developing an approach to typography that works at the 'level of the text', it was the *Stuff* design test project that gave me the first opportunity to really test the theory through practice as it contained two relatively lengthy texts. Initial decisions relating to format, typeface and grid were always taken with content in mind, so could be said to be working at the level of the text, and indeed taking this approach, which I would liken to a form of analysis, was productive in developing the potential to be drawn from both form and content. However, what is not clear in Mermoz's writing is how far one needs to go, typographically, to get down to 'the level of the text'. I feel the *Stuff* book rises above Mermoz's criticisms of the generic typographic interventions applied to *Cranbrook Design: The New Discourse* (Aldersley Williams et al 1990), and that it achieves the addressing of both 'the content of the text and the reading process' that Mermoz (1995: np) applauds in *The Telephone Book* (Ropell, 1989), designed by Richard Eckersley⁸ (fig. 299). However, in practice this distinction between generic and specific typographic responses to the text can be difficult to execute, particularly when one is applying a montage writing type of strategy in the text.

I had expected Mermoz's approach to really reveal its potential through a multi-linear text, however, early design tests show that in attempting to engage at the level of the text within the essay I had attempted to address too many different specific aspects of the text directly. In doing

8 Described on its back cover as a 'book-as-object' [that] deconstructs telephonic communication with Derridean playfulness, *The Telephone Book* utilises content driven typographic interventions across almost every spread. It's 'User's manual' (Ropell 1989: np) suggests that the book will 'resist' the reader, who is asked 'to read with their ears', even though that at first they may find this disconcerting.



so, very little remained stable and this led to a lack of clarity in relation to the text as a whole. One could describe the format and grid of a book as its architecture, and the type and images as furniture—if neither of these offers some kind of visual consistency at any point in the proceedings then, as briefly discussed at the end of the initial section referring to montage writing, it becomes very difficult to see any sense of the whole amongst the disparate parts. Indeed, in some of these early tests the pages reflected different typographic treatments on each spread and were therefore essentially functioning as separate images, with no thought for the book at all—a clear example of ‘a confused presentation’ (figs. 300–303). The early tests for the life story also show that the footnote system for referencing the asides was becoming the dominant feature on the page, straying into the meta-typography category and away from the proposed conceptual approach that was to reveal the personality and sense of humour of the life story’s narrator (figs. 304–305).

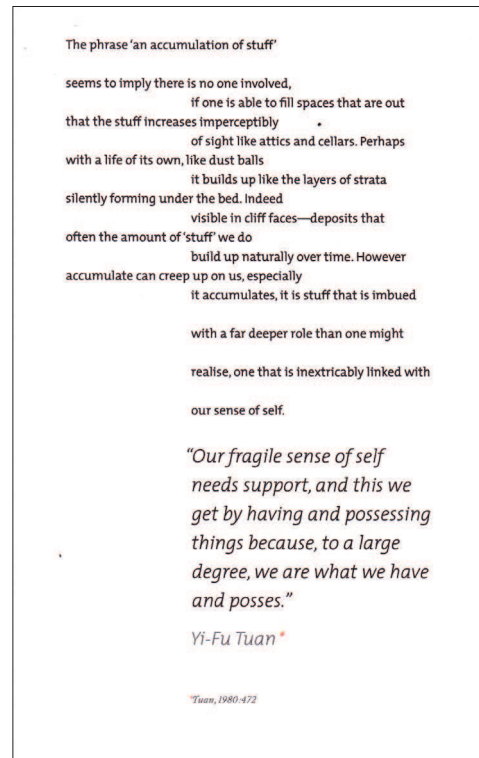
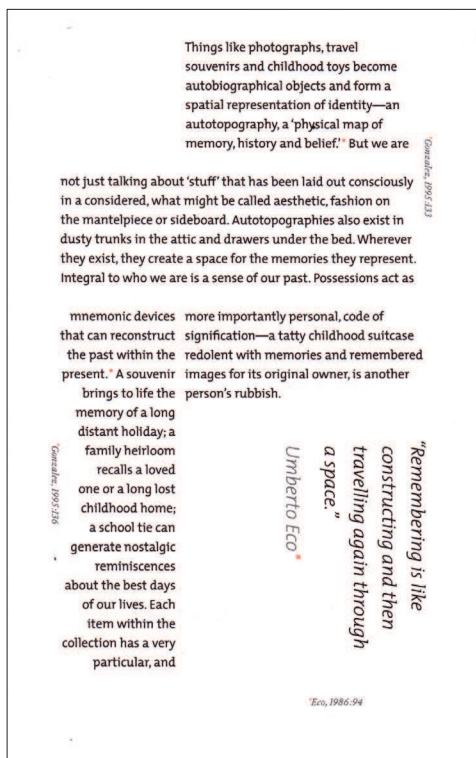
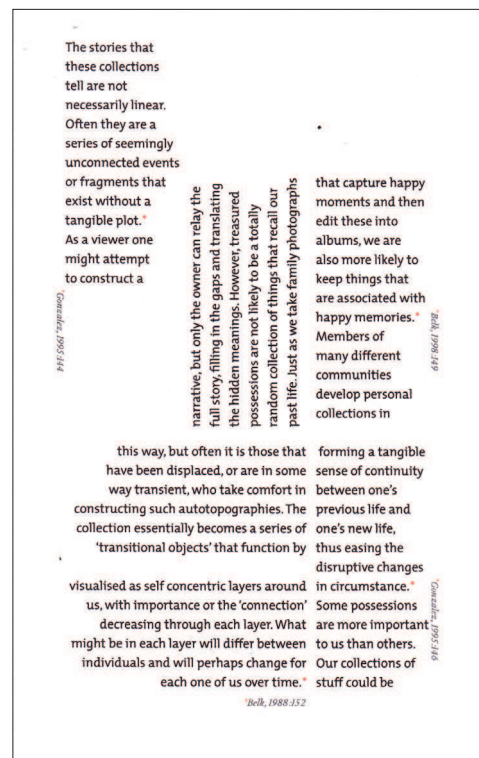
Fig. 300: Example of early prototypes: *Stuff*Fig. 301: Example of early prototypes: *Stuff*Fig. 302: Example of early prototypes: *Stuff*Fig. 303: Example of early prototypes: *Stuff*



Fig. 304: Example of early prototypes: *Stuff*

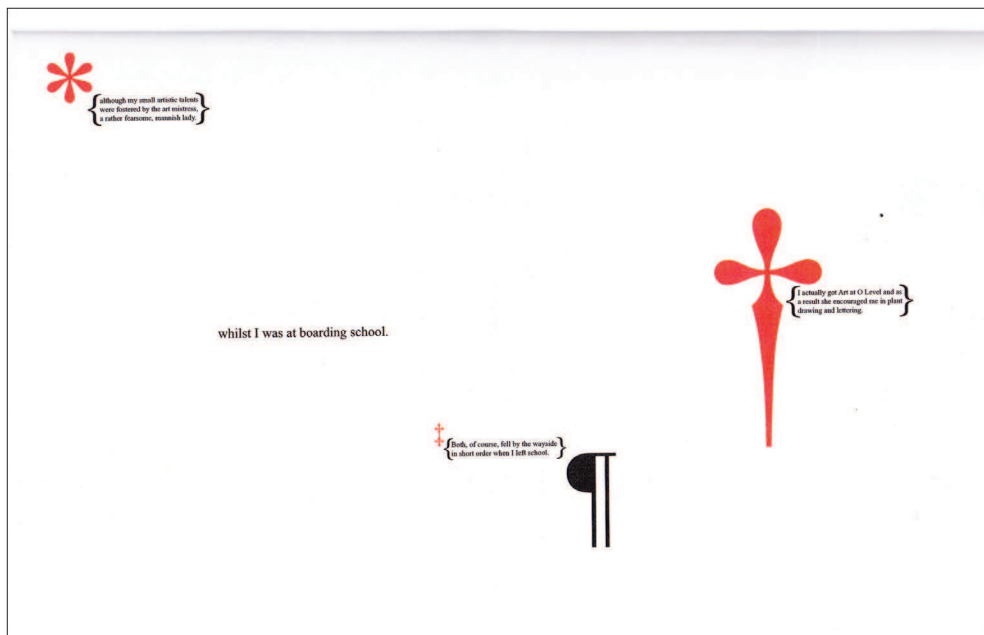


Fig. 305: Example of early prototypes: *Stuff*

Perhaps one of the problems here is that Mermoz offers few examples of texts that apply his ideas productively, so one has little to go on in terms of assessing whether the approach is too specific or too generic. Here, then, one must revert to the process of analysis and reflection in order to progress the work. For example, the early designs for *Stuff* that I have critiqued above seemed visually stimulating and exciting at the time of execution, particularly those exploring the footnote system. As a new idea can often be mistaken for the best idea, a period of time between the execution of the work and the reflection can be useful to gain a somewhat more ‘removed’ perspective, thus enabling a more critical analysis. An excerpt from my blog dated 8 November 2009, three days after the initial design of the life story pages reveals the following:

I may have been accidentally enjoying making work that looks like it fell from the pages of *Emigre* circa 1992. But I’m not sure what I was doing was making work that reflected the human story, the real content—work that engaged at the ‘level of the text’. It is inhuman typography—it has become perhaps too much about the system and not enough about the person.

So, having realized this, I could then factor it in to the next iteration of the design, thus restarting the recursive process of analysis and design. Perhaps this reveals something of the fragile nature of the balance between form and content. Too many typographic interventions, even if they are content led, lead the page to become confused and perhaps even ‘too visual’—essentially one enters into the realm of typographic pyrotechnics that Mermoz (1998) sees as obscuring the content and leading to an overly retinal engagement with the page. In one sense this also creates something of a paradox in relation to Ingold’s (2007) thoughts on the page, as in this instance the page is in danger of having too many ‘voices’ because of the designer’s intervention; at the same time, and perhaps because of this, it clarifies the fact that mechanical print, even that which is generated digitally, still retains the voice of the designer and, through his or her interventions, can also retain a sense of place.

These structural, typographic, and navigational interventions may be developed on screen or in sketchbooks, but only reach their full potential through prototyping and production. Production not only sees the translation of the design ideas into reality, but, along with prototyping, also offers a further chance to explore the materiality of the work. This is a key

area for exploitation and, as this research centres on print based graphic design, it is an opportunity to once again offer some thoughts as to how this can be used to develop experiential work that addresses issues of non-representational theory and the possibilities of page as place. The physical aspect of the work can engage the reader in a multi-sensory way and is therefore something that GIS, for example, or other screen based media is unable to do. Perhaps it may offer geographers, disillusioned with print, an opportunity to re-evaluate its possibilities.

8.3 The place of materials and production

The material aspects of any piece of graphic design offer much in relation to the communication and engagement with the reader. In the same way that place is not experienced through sight alone, design, and particularly the page of each of the books generated through this research, engage the reader through a range of senses. The reader is able to interact with these books in a physical way—through touch and smell—adding a further range of interventions to the visual, that trigger the reader's imagination and enable them to bring their own understanding of these experiences to bear on their reading of the book and, therefore, their understanding of place. The design test projects discussed here are all very limited runs, and perhaps could be likened to artist's books. This enables a much greater flexibility in terms of sourcing materials, and the use of these in relation to the book format and binding. This section will explore such design interventions within the context of the potential of paper stock and the form of the book. It will also address the notion that analysis continues through the physical act of engaging with materials as part of the design process, and the idea that production can be just as effective using low-tech equipment and materials found in run of the mill stationers and academic offices as it can be using specialist facilities like letterpress.

Stock is an important element of all graphic design artefacts, whether they are printed in the tens of thousands or are designed as a much more limited edition. Even a seemingly simple choice regarding white paper can be made between hundreds of types, each offering a slightly different tone, texture or translucency. A printed book is designed to be handled and therefore its tactile quality plays a huge part in its reception by the reader. A decision about stock has played a part in the design of each test project undertaken within this research. Some of these decisions were linked

to, and restricted by, the physical mode of production; for example, the *Hackney Conversations* series needed to use a paper that was appropriate for letterpress use on the mechanical presses.

However, the majority of decisions were made as part of the concept of the books and developed through analysis and reflection during the design process. For example, two versions of *Freecycle* have been developed. Firstly, one constructed using recycled A4 paper that has been reclaimed from a variety of college libraries and research spaces, as well as paper reclaimed through the process of this research; for example, redundant test prints and draft versions of written texts. Here the stock is used in relation to the ideals of the Freecycle movement, and the book is created through the process of recycling. The reuse of what is essentially waste material not only works conceptually, but it adds secondary interest to the book itself as the pages reveal a previous life in terms of text or images. The books are made using French folded pages—the *Freecycle* text is printed on the unused side of the reclaimed paper, which is then folded in half and bound at the side where the edges of the A4 meet, not at the fold. This means the old text or images can be seen through the stock if it is a relatively lightweight paper, and by widening the fold of the page at the top or bottom of each page (figs. 306–307). Reusing stock in this way also means every book is an individual design and is extremely cheap to reproduce. Secondly, an ‘art’ version has been developed that is constructed from A2 letterpress prints, featuring some of the statements developed during the data analysis, that have been cropped down to A4 size and again printed on the reverse side—re-using the paper and again revealing images of the letterpress through the *Freecycle* text.

The cover of *A Haptic Journey* developed directly from my experience of running my hands across stone walls in Edinburgh and recreates a sense of that physical engagement with place. The use of a P180 fine grade sandpaper puts the reader literally in touch with my experience of Edinburgh as soon as they pick up the book (figs. 308–309). It also shows the potential of widening one’s thinking about which materials could be used in order to add to the experience and interaction the reader has with the book. The *Stuff* book also uses materials of a non-traditional nature to draw the reader into the content of the book and offer them tangible references to the sites of such collections. For example, the end pages use wallpapers in order to reference the interior of a house as if one was

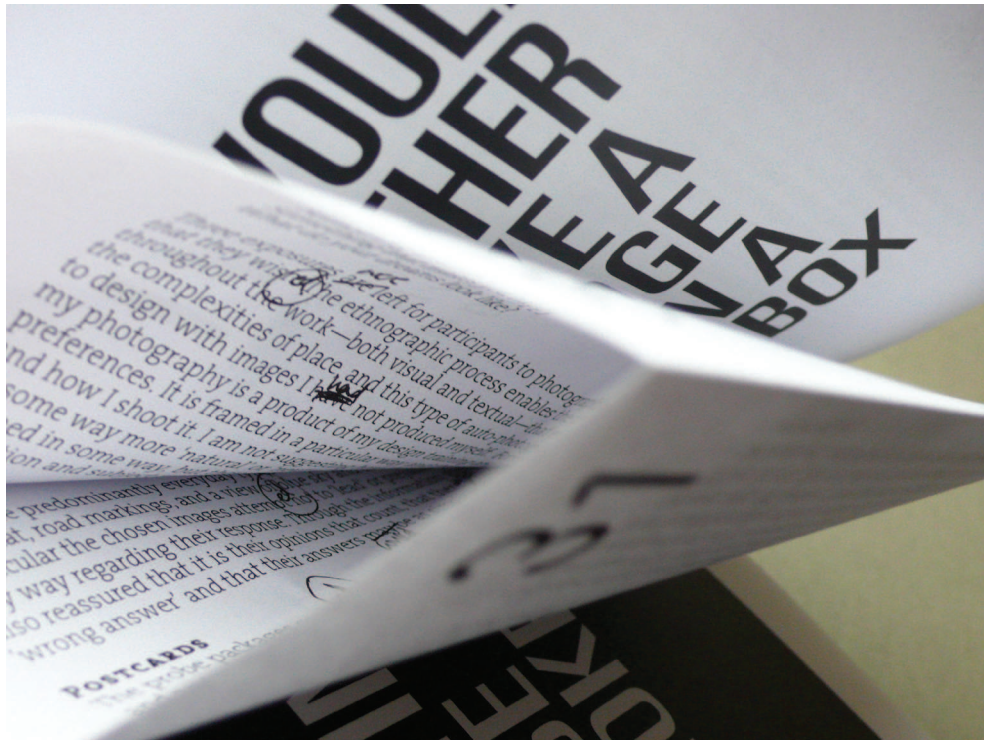


Fig. 306: Example of stock use: **Freecycle**



Fig. 307: Example of stock use: **Freecycle**

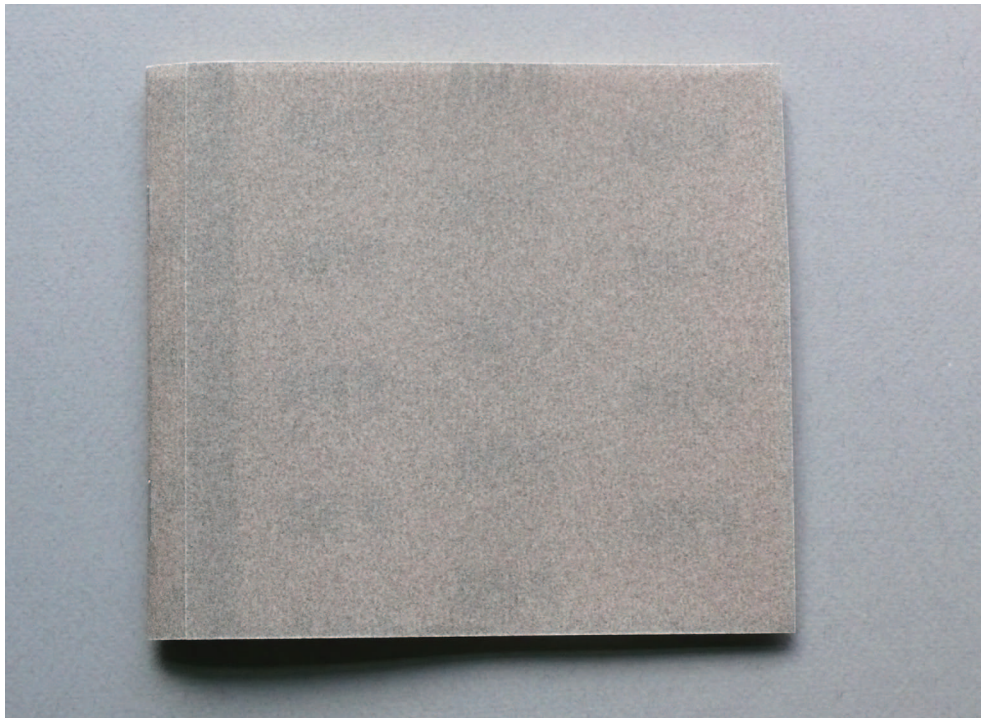


Fig. 308: Cover: **A Haptic Journey**

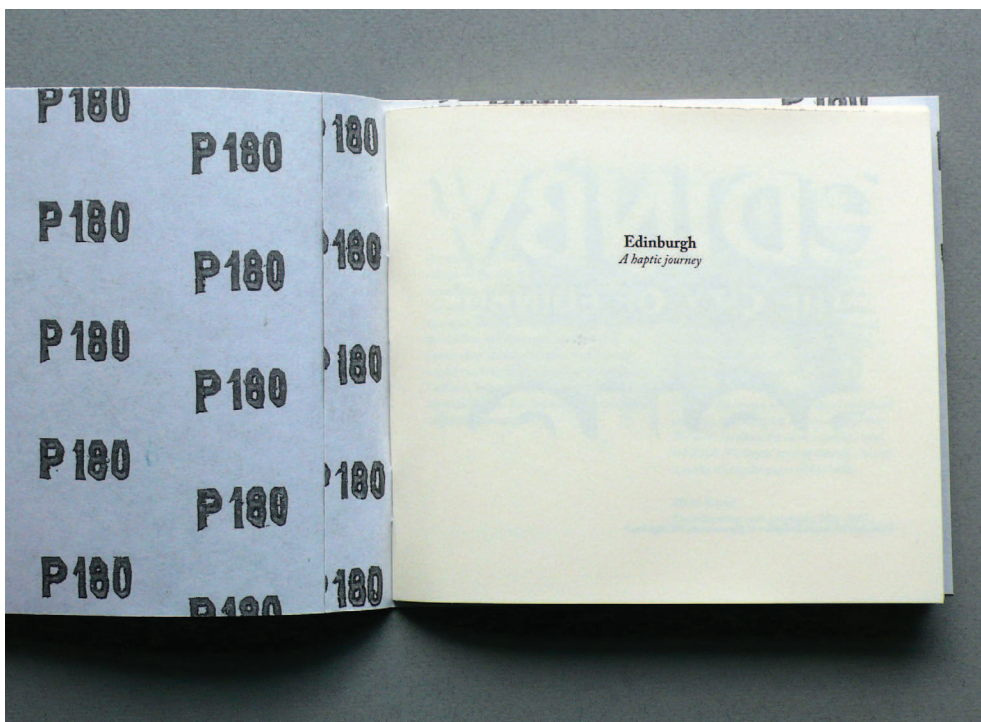


Fig. 309: Inside cover: **A Haptic Journey**

opening the front door when one opens the book (fig. 310). Glassine paper has been used to interleave some of the pages that contain images to reference a photograph album (fig. 311)—often one of the primary ways memories are stored. *Stuff* also brings into play the reader's sense of smell as perfumed drawer liners are used to create some of the pages (fig. 312). These interventions use some materials that perhaps might be seen as dated these days—for example, the arrival of digital photography means that few images are actually printed and placed in albums, and certainly not in the type that contain the protective sheets of glassine paper. However, the use of the materials is specific as it is an attempt, through a multi-sensory engagement with the book, to draw the reader's imagination to sites they may have experienced where such items are present, for example, to the homes of one's older relatives or to the collection of old family photographs in a traditional album that may have been collected through the generations. This then prompts the reader to frame their own understandings of memories and collections within the context and content of the book.

Stuff uses other elements that begin to transgress the conventional format of the book and further develop its potential as a three dimensional, temporal space. Bound within the covers, alongside pages constructed from traditional and non-traditional materials are items, that not only function as another page of the book, but also as a separate place of exploration, discovery and imagination. For example, envelopes containing items such as used stamps, cigarette cards, letters, old photographs and slides—purchased from second hand shops within Hackney—are included, allowing the reader to open them and draw out the contents (figs. 313–314). Such possessions act as mnemonic devices that reconstruct the past within the present (Gonzalez 1995: 136). The collection of mementos recreates an autotopography—'a physical map of memory, history and belief' (Gonzalez 1995: 133) and the book allows the reader to traverse this type of map through their physical interaction with the mementos, images and memories. This physical engagement with the book and the items again acts as an attempt to trigger the reader's memories of their own childhood hobbies, family holidays, or the experience of looking through drawers and cupboards in family homes that contain such collections. By enabling each reader to bring something of oneself to the experience, it reinforces the



Fig. 310: Example of stock use: **Stuff**



Fig. 311: Example of stock use: **Stuff**



Fig. 312: Example of stock use: **Stuff**



Fig. 313: Example of non-traditional materials: **Stuff**



Fig. 314: Example of non-traditional materials: **Stuff**

possibility that each reading of the book will become an individual experience. *Stuff* therefore becomes a re/presentation of place that is open and porous and re-enacted each time it read by a different person.

Both the addition of the items within envelopes and the use of unconventional papers again reinforce the two types of temporality at work within the pages of *Stuff*. Through these design interventions the reader is invited to interact with the physicality of the book at different points, for example, smelling the perfumed drawer liners or opening the envelopes, creating a pause in their reading. It is this physical pause that then offers the 'space' for their memories and imagination to bring about a second pause, in which they reflect on similar experiences within their own lives, such as family holidays or handling old photographs of long dead, distant relatives.

The sense of a three dimensional book does not have to be achieved through the addition of such unusual elements though. It is possible to work with within its pages and with ordinary paper to develop a more spatial experience. Within its pages, *Food Miles* uses a range of structural devices to develop this three dimensional sense and engage the reader in the progress of the research and the book in a physical way. For example, when I visited Magdalenka on Stamford Hill to buy some Polish food, my garden was being landscaped and, by chance, one of the gardeners was Polish. Taking home a pack of Delijce Szampańskie Pomarańczowe (the Polish version of Jaffa cakes that were highly recommended to me by the woman in the shop) I shared the cakes with the gardeners and we struck up a conversation about other Polish foods and drinks. This led to further purchases on my part, and, on the final day of the landscaping, the consumption of a range of Polish drinks and chocolate bars provided by the gardener. So, although not strictly on the stretch of road I was researching, these experiences clearly developed from the process of the research. To this end they are contained within the book, but bound between the French fold that contains the one of the original Polish experiences and designed using a smaller page format, thus becoming a book within a book (figs. 315–316).

Also, as I was undertaking my regular journeys up and down the road I realised that as one approaches the stretch of Kingsland Road that has Dalston Kingsland Station on one side and the entrance to Ridley Road market on the other, the street became extremely busy. In fact, on some

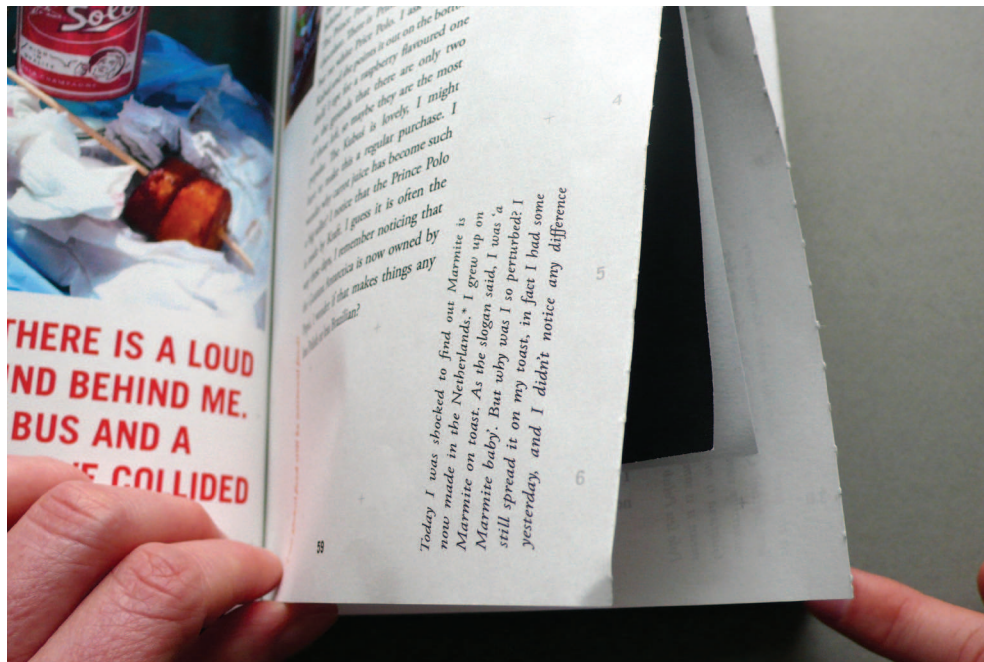


Fig. 315: Example of the three dimensional space of the book: **Food Miles**

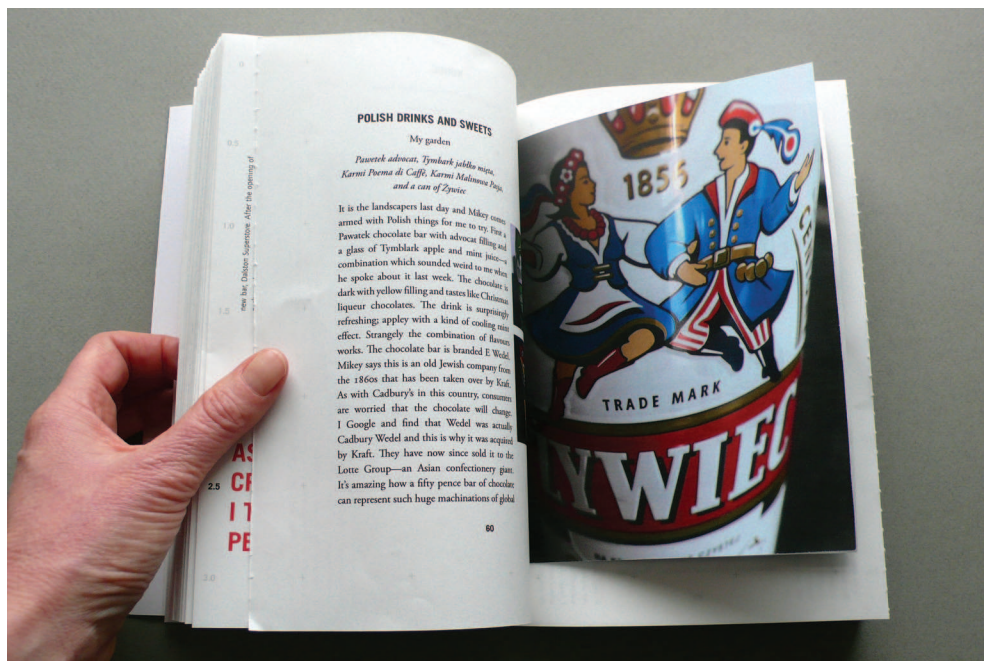


Fig. 316: Example of the three dimensional space of the book: **Food Miles**

days it almost seemed that I could be swept down into the market by the flow of the pedestrians. I began to think of Ridley Road market as a focal point of the road—it is roughly half way between the start and end points of the *Food Miles* research territory and people descend upon it from both north and south. Therefore I decided it would be appropriate to ‘branch off’ into the market and explore some of the food and drink experiences available. To represent this, the two Ridley Road experiences are situated towards the middle of the book and are contained within gatefold sections, the outside of which contains a spread from the ongoing journey. On opening the two gatefold pages, the reader is essentially presented with a double width spread that rotates the grid 90°, so although the food writing is still central to the individual page, it is perpendicular in relation to the rest of the food writing texts. This implies my shift in direction from South to North along Kingsland Road, to West to East along Ridley Road, and takes the reader through the same change by their need to either turn the book or turn their head. In some ways both the French folds and gatefolds allow a ‘doubling’ of the space within the book, allowing the reader to experience further elements of the book that are hidden within and beneath the immediately obvious pages (figs. 317–319).

The *EWG Old Town* book further explores this idea of doubling through its use of French Folds. It also introduces further physical interventions into the form of the book, through die cuts and perforations, with these working in tandem with the French folds to evoke my experience. At the time however, some aspects of my experiences within the Old Town of Edinburgh seemed to resist recording. One’s sense of place is built up through a myriad of elements—visual images, sounds, smells, interaction with people, even tactile elements—and these can also often seem to blend together to create something that is more than the sum of the individual parts. In Edinburgh I could photograph the sun-filled courtyards, the dank, dark steps, and tight passages of the Old Town, to remind me of what the place looked like, but these images didn’t completely convey what I had sensed or experienced—the shift from light to dark, the tangible sense of history. In this instance I channeled my experience directly into the making. I needed to explore this physical sense of place through the material and physical process of designing and making, and this became a form of analysis through design and prototyping.



Fig. 317: Example of the three dimensional space of the book: **Food Miles**



Fig. 318: Example of the three dimensional space of the book: **Food Miles**



Fig. 319: Example of the three dimensional space of the book: **Food Miles**

In trying to recreate this physical sense of exploring these spaces within the pages of a book I began to think about using the facsimile of the 1765 map of Edinburgh I had purchased in such a way as to place the reader 'within' the space rather than above it. I wanted to emphasise the disorienting nature of the Old Town and the changes from light to dark, and back again. To this end, I scanned the map and began to enlarge sections of it, which I printed onto A4 paper. As I enlarged the images, they retained a sense of 'mapness', but also took on a more abstract geometric sense of negative and positive space. As I did this I realised that as the scale of the images increased so did the sense of either light or dark, so this change in scale is used throughout the pages of the book to get a sense of moving between the main streets into the small closes. Occasionally the printed pages are also reversed and then an unprinted page included, implying the change from dark to bright sunlight as one moves towards and into the open courtyards. As I was experimenting with this idea of negative and positive space I began to cut away small, self-contained sections within the pages I was printing.

I'm not sure I can 'theorise' how to make this—I can start with a broad idea of traveling along, enlarging and die-cutting, but it needs to evolve through the making/testing/experimenting. Interesting, it is like an exploration of the exploration (20.05.10).

Through the making and prototyping I realised that by using a French fold to create a 'hidden' space I could place texts within this space that relate to some of the events, buildings and characters that once brought to life these overcrowded streets and that fragments of these texts would be visible through the cut away areas. In order to allow the reader to reveal the full text the edge of the French folded page is perforated. This perforation makes a full use of the idea of the doubling of the space through French folds. The perforations perhaps act in a similar way to Springgay et al's (2005: 904) use of the /, as on tearing it and revealing the hidden texts, one immediately halves the one French folded page, but at the same time doubles it into two traditional pages. If the reader continues to separate all the pages the size of the book, and the number of pages, effectively double (figs. 320–325). The Old Town of Edinburgh inspired me to explore in a physical, experiential way, and, through its design interventions, the book implicates the reader in a similarly physical act of exploration in order to reveal its full contents. My sketchbook notes reveal the physical, temporal

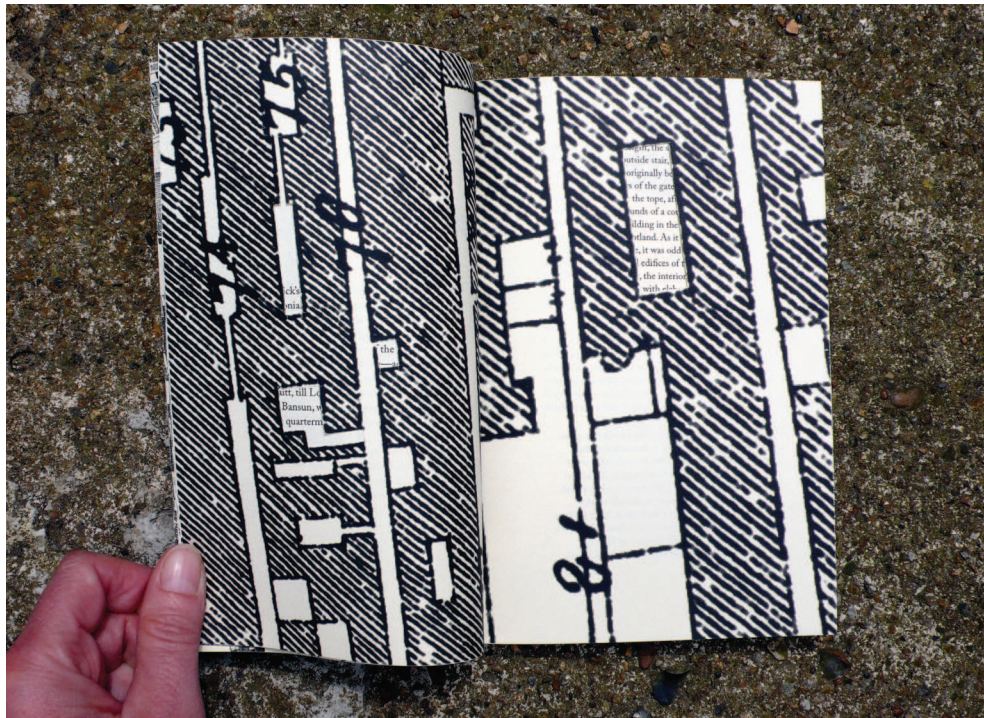


Fig. 320: Example of the three-dimensional space of the book: **Old Town**

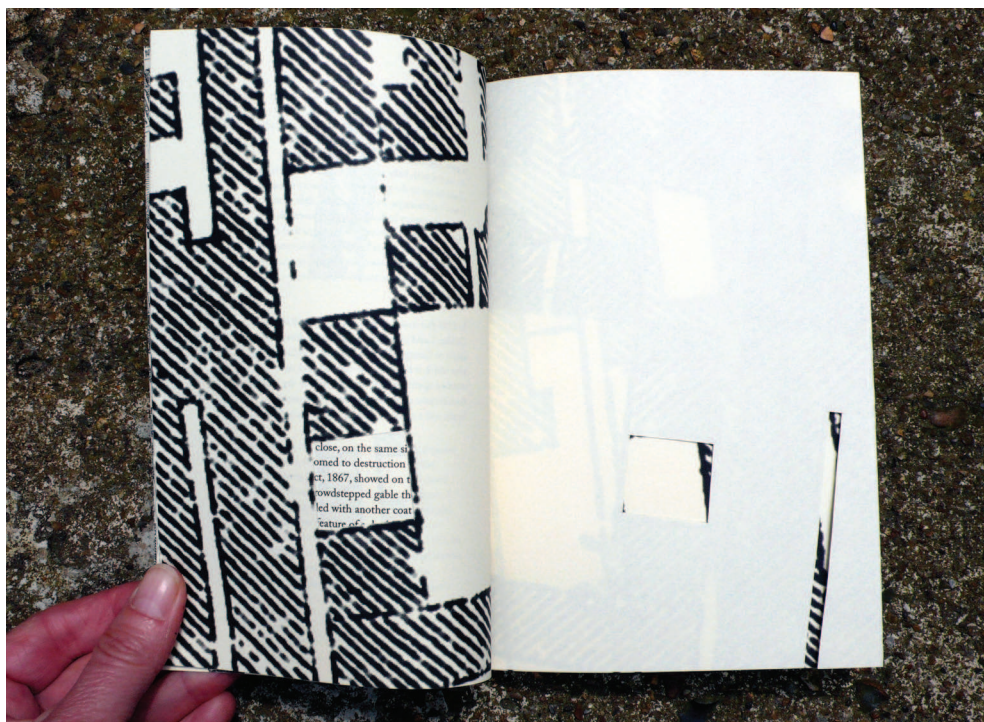


Fig. 321: Example of the three-dimensional space of the book: **Old Town**

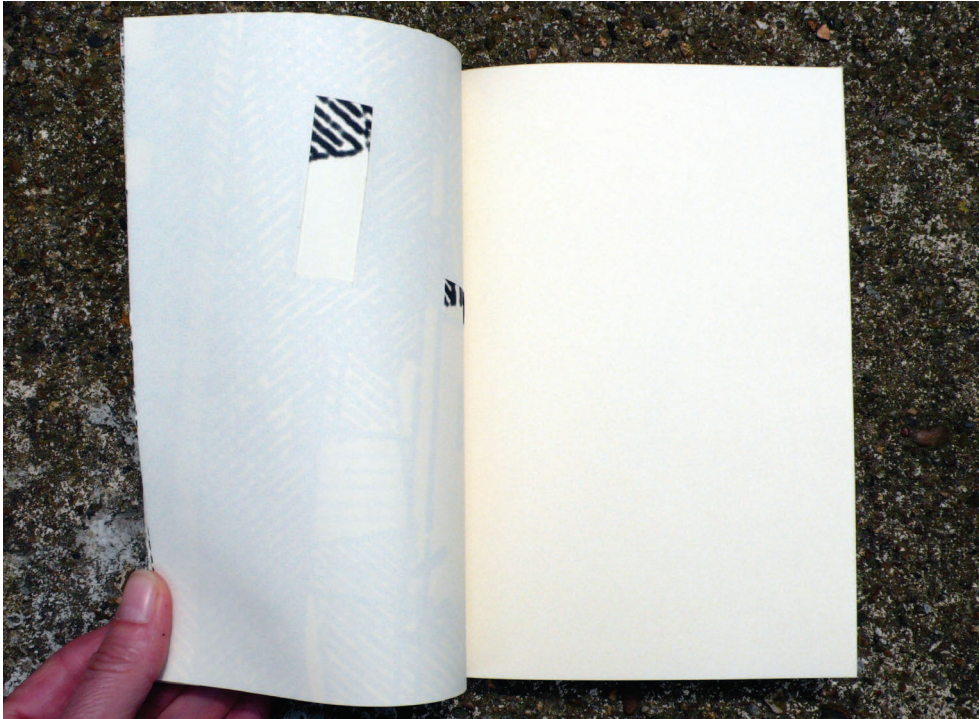


Fig. 322: Example of the three-dimensional space of the book: **Old Town**



Fig. 323: Example of the three-dimensional space of the book: **Old Town**



Fig. 324: Example of the three-dimensional space of the book: **Old Town**

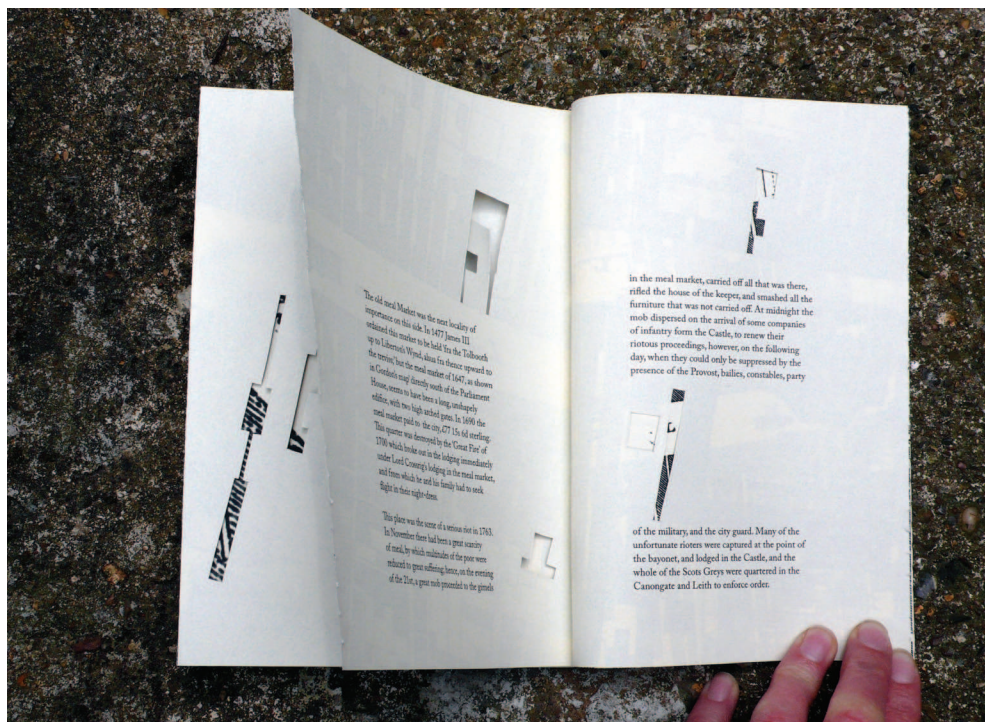


Fig. 325: Example of the three-dimensional space of the book: **Old Town**

space of the book as a productive area for experimentation in relation to the interaction of the reader:

How can speed be affected and created by physical means in a book. In 3d space we can rush by areas in order to get from A-B – this is akin to flicking the pages of a magazine or book. In doing so we miss things both in place and book. Can we slow people down or show them they are missing things? (07.10.09)

In *Stuff*, *Food Miles* and *Old Town*, the French folds, hidden texts and images, the perforations and the doubling of the space all slow the reader down, hinting at further things to be found, revealing fragments that encourage them to look further for what they may have missed.

As with *A Haptic Journey*, the idea for the *Old Town* design test project developed from an immediate sense of place and a very basic physical interaction with the streets. However, with *Old Town* the design itself has also developed through a physical interaction with the materials used and would not have developed in the way it has without a 'hands on' engagement with paper and scalpel. Such immediate, often low-tech, types of experiments and prototyping bring into play Schön's (1987) notion of reflection-in-action—a more immediate type of analysis executed during the process of making. This form of reflection may only be recorded in brief note form on a prototype, or perhaps not even that as one may realise a potentially useful development within the actual process of making, enabling a swift change of direction that is recorded through the adjustment of the design of the prototype rather than in words. Also, although this particular section focuses on the place of materials, prototyping doesn't just equate to testing different materials and exploring design possibilities through the making. Prototyping also enables one to put initial theories relating to concepts and design into practice. Like writing, which 'deepens our analytical endeavour' (Coffey & Atkinson 1996: 109), prototyping works similarly, by creating a physical, permanent form that enables reflection and revision. Here, the material form of the work, in a sense, re-sites one in place and allows further reflection on one's experience of place. The shift from idea or theory to graphic design practice allows for reflection and greater understanding of the potential, or otherwise, of the initial concepts—as was the case with the *Newsagents' windows* prototypes discussed earlier in this chapter.

However, a low-tech approach does not have to centre on pre-production prototypes. It can be seen as an accessible way of approaching the geo/graphic design process—one that is inclusive to both disciplines, rather than just graphic designers who may have access to specialist printing facilities. Also, low-tech doesn't have to equate with low production values. For example, both *EWG* books use 80gsm ivory coloured paper purchased from Staples and are printed using a £60 black and white laser printer. The colour of the paper echoes much of the brick I encountered in Edinburgh and the thinness of the paper leads to some show through, which I think adds to the sense that is more to reveal behind each page. The original rubbings for *A Haptic Journey* were done onto the ordinary paper of cheap sketchbooks with a wax crayon (fig. 326), and the facsimile map was scanned using a £70 desktop scanner. Binding has either been done by hand, after consulting instructions from the internet, or uses staples. There is nothing here that is prohibitively expensive or difficult to get hold of. Perhaps the perception of a phrase like 'artist's book' conjures up the kind of limited editions that cost thousands of pounds and are held in the special collections of national galleries. However, this idea of a limited edition can be used in a positive way—equipment such as photocopiers, scanners, A4 paper and printers, found in most academic departments regardless of discipline, can be used to generate work that goes beyond the traditional use of such tools.

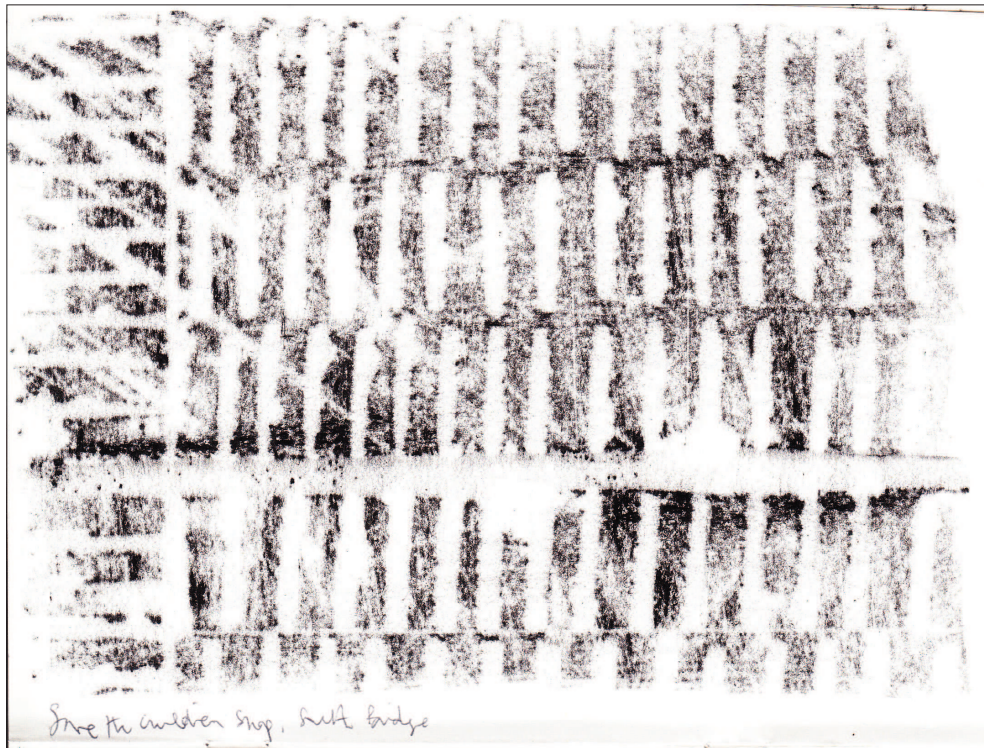


Fig. 326: Example of rubbing taken from Edinburgh building

Much of the work referred to above has at some point in its development relied on digital media, whether that has been for scanning and printing, or for layout. However, all of these design interventions, regardless of the role played by the digital tools, develop the book in relation to a physical, temporal, three-dimensional space. Here the book once again reveals its potential as place, drawing the reader into its pages to explore its hidden spaces, twists and turns. Once again, I would suggest that in contrast to Ingold's (2007) thinking, these interventions can only be developed through the designers interaction with the media and content—their voice is clearly present within the place of the pages and the book, and this drives the reader's interaction to that which is far beyond a passive gazing at a screen. Both 'technical' and 'creative' design aspects of the work are used in tandem to again achieve the potential of both form and content. Ingold, however, doesn't simply equate the arrival of the digital realm as sounding the death knell for the place of the page; he sees any form of mechanical print as being partly responsible. As three of the design test projects—*Type Cast*, *Death of the Author*, and *Hackney Conversations*—used letterpress as a medium, it is useful to assess whether the role of the designer impacts on this type of production differently.

To describe letterpress printing as 'mechanical' is not only to focus on one small element of the process, but also to focus on the element that perhaps has the least impact on the production of the work. To produce these particular design test projects each letter of each word has to be set by hand, and one has to work within a system of measurement that is specific to type—points and picas—and learn that within this system there is no room for error; there is no delete button or space bar. Once the type has been set it needs to be proofed on the galley press. If the type is a small point size, like the paragraphs of text within *Type Cast* and *Death of the Author*, even a reasonably experienced designer is likely to find mistakes. As the type is set upside down, and the letters are essentially back to front due to the printing process, it can be very difficult to spot the difference between b, d, p and q for example, particularly when you are using characters that are, in this case, approximately 5mm deep, and cast onto the end of a piece of lead that is about 20mm long and 2 to 5mm wide (fig. 327).

Once each section of the design has been proofed, these need to be pasted up onto a sheet of the paper the same size as that which is to be used for the final print run, and the spacing between each part of the design worked out (fig. 328). Only then is the type ready to be placed onto the bed of the press and the first imposition print taken (fig. 329). Once the print is taken, if it is not in the desired place on the paper the print is marked up, measured and the paper moved accordingly (fig. 330). A second imposition print is then made on this same sheet, to ensure that the adjustments are correct, with the process repeated if a mistake has been made in the calculations (fig. 331). Whilst this has emphasized the very human centred, physical nature of the process, this is not to suggest that it is 'merely technical execution' (Ingold 2007: 26) and all about measuring and positioning in a practical sense. Through the early proofing part of the process the designer is also testing the design and typographic choices; for example, typeface, size and weight, in relation to the impact the choices will have on the reader's engagement with, and interpretation of, the work.

Again, this is a form of analysis through design, and one that propagates a productive relationship between the 'technical' and 'imaginative' design aspects of the process. Obviously before the proofing stage is even begun, the designer will also have developed their ideas within a sketchbook, or on screen, and will have identified the use of letterpress for a reason. In this instance, letterpress was appropriate for *Type Cast* and *Death of the Author* as the time consuming, specialist process creates a contrast with the cheap newsprint stock used. This reflects the inverse correlation between the short shelf life of a newspaper and the lasting effects of the language used within the media about a place such as Hackney. This time consuming process that leads to an imprint on the page could also be said to create something of a 'pause' through the design. For *Type Cast* and *Death of the Author* this pause highlights the cumulative impact of the individual headlines and allows the reader to gain an insight into the ongoing construction of place via language. In the *Hackney Conversations* test project the use of letterpress to visualise the narrative fragments 'freeze frames' the moment, creating a pause within the ongoing process of place.



Fig. 327: Example of 12pt lead type



Fig. 328: Example of letterpress paste up proof



Fig. 329: Type positioned on the bed of the press



Fig. 330: First test print marked up



Fig. 331: Further test print marked up

8.4 Conclusion

This final chapter documenting the development and testing of the geo/graphic design process reveals the place of design as one that can offer a multitude of strategies for developing re/presentations of place that offer an interactive, engaging experience for the reader. However, in order to do this, the designer/researcher needs to first work to develop a productive relationship between form and content—this is key throughout the process and requires a continual process of analysis and reflection. Decisions relating to format, typefaces and structure are inextricably linked and these initial design decisions, made within the frame of the page, should be products of the analysis of content in relation to form and could therefore be described as ‘working at the level of the text’ (Mermoz 1995: np, 2002: 1). However, it is through the transition from page to book that this chapter reveals a temporal, three dimensional, physical space of interaction that is capable of offering a re/presentation of place that moves beyond some kind of like for like translation or mimesis. It is a space that acknowledges ‘the event-ness of the world’ (Latham & Conradson 2003: 1902), and, through the execution of proactive design interventions, implicates and engages the reader in both the revealing and unfolding of these events. The book can be profitably conceived as a time-space continuum that is able to offer the reader control over the unfolding of the narrative.

Typography and structure can be used to develop ‘navigational systems’ throughout the pages that avoid the notion of a ‘confused presentation’ and encourage multiple readings. The space can be ‘opened up’ for the reader—beyond a traditional linear progression—through such systems. The reader’s interest throughout this journey needs to be sustained and this can be undertaken using a variety of strategies. For example, pace and rhythm are central to producing pages that reveal the book as a temporal space. A productive juxtaposition of texts and/or images can also offer the reader an opportunity to seek connections that further illustrate the context of the work and enrich their understanding. The strategy of montage writing is also useful as a method for developing non-linear narratives through a productive use of both form and content. However, it is particularly through the use of montage writing that the balance between form and content is revealed as fragile. Montage writing inevitably brings together a diverse range of individual texts to create a whole. The application of Mermoz’s strategy is therefore made more difficult by the diversity of

content—too many typographic interventions and the individual pages can become overly visual and confused—remember, a book is a series of individual pages that construct a whole.

The physicality of the book can also be productively exploited through the introduction and use of different materials. Paper stock is a critical component of the form/content equation, and therefore one should think beyond the use of traditional white, A4 paper, and consider engaging the reader through further tactile and olfactory means. Elements other than paper can also be bound into the book and it is also possible for the format and size of pages to change throughout the book, if this again is useful in terms of developing the form/content relationship and, therefore, the reader's experience. Design interventions like those executed within *Stuff* doubly enhance the temporal qualities of the book. By creating pauses in which the reader interacts with elements of the book, this physical interaction elicits a secondary pause with the reader prompted to contemplate memories or aspects of their own relationship with family, treasured possessions, and the place of home.

The three-dimensional nature of the book also offers further 'spaces' of participation—French folds, gatefolds, die cuts and perforations all engage the reader in physical exploration of the book, thus creating interaction. Here, the development of these spaces of interaction within the book requires the designer/researcher to engage with the materials of production through a 'hands on' approach. Some ideas will only reveal themselves in this way, which can be seen as a process of analysis through prototyping and design. The aim of the geo/graphic design process is that it should be widely accessible both in terms of economics and disciplines, so the approaches discussed here do not just rely on high tech equipment available to graphic designers, but make productive use of equipment and materials found in a run of the mill academic office—low-tech approaches do not have to equate to low production values.

For cultural geographers with little design experience, accessibility is also evident through the simplicity of the majority of the graphic and typographic interventions made. One could mistakenly assume that to generate a page that brings place to life, or to offer a temporal, interactive experience within a book, the design interventions would need to be made with a high level of graphic design expertise. However, one does not need to resort to typographic pyrotechnics to achieve this, and the simplicity of

the moves made within the design test projects is in contrast to the range of experiences they can generate for the reader. Perhaps geographers could benefit from likening 'design moves', that explore the place of the page and book, to similar bodily moves they might make when traditionally exploring place. For example, turning corners, looking beneath or behind things, changing positions to get a different view, or collecting artefacts or ephemera that offer other insights into everyday life in a place. In this instance, a simple repositioning of text on a 90° angle necessitates the reader repositioning body or moving the book, either way it emphasises the links between the physical space of the book and place.

Indeed, all these design interventions engage the reader in an active way, creating 'spaces for the imagination' (Marcus 1994: 45, cited in Crang & Cook 2007: 195), therefore enabling the book to generate a new re/presentation of place with each reading. It is therefore a space that calls into question, and disputes, Ingold's (2007) somewhat rigidly defined views regarding the page and the role of the designer. The proactively *subjective* role that the designer plays in the editorial and design process, clearly leaves traces throughout the work that can create an unfolding narrative and one that offers the reader a range of possibilities in terms of how it can be read. Whilst the reader isn't made to 'perform' the work in the medieval sense of reading aloud, the books are performative in the sense that they need to be engaged with physically. The narrative also has to be reconstructed through the actual process of reading, so a passive survey of the page will not suffice. In this way, the book, and by turn the page, can clearly be seen to function as 'place' for the reader. The approaches discussed above also productively harness the 'technical' and 'creative' aspects of design in tandem in order to achieve the potential that resides within the combination of form and content. Ingold's (2007: 26) description of the mechanical nature of print also seems to ignore much of the process that has to be undertaken—through both the physical and cerebral actions of the designer—before the ink meets the paper. From the perspective of the geo/graphic design process there is no separation, and the choice of process or materials is, in a sense, immaterial, as long as they make a productive contribution to the form/content relationship.

So, although these three chapters are separated somewhat artificially, the structure has enabled each method used and each part of the process to be analysed in detail, and to reveal the key developments and findings that

lead to an articulation of the geo/graphic design process. However, because of the separation, these findings remain somewhat fragmented. The appendix will therefore draw together these findings and outlines in detail the geo/graphic design process and a set of criteria for its validation.

Throughout all phases of this research I have developed my understanding of Hackney and of the potential that graphic design has to contribute to the understanding and representation of place. The following, concluding chapter therefore begins with reflections on how the research process has repositioned and reframed my understanding of place through practice.

9

Conclusions

The geo/graphic design process is a product of research that draws together processes from both cultural geography and graphic design. In a Gestalt-like sense, the resultant set of methods perhaps evidence that this interdisciplinary ‘whole’ is greater than the sum of its parts. It is the synthesis of these parts that has enabled me to reposition and reframe my own practice in relation to place.

9.2 Repositioning and reframing practice and place

It is the interdisciplinary nature of this study in particular that has proved so rewarding. To situate oneself between two disciplines is at once nerve-wracking and hugely stimulating. Although one cannot help but feel daunted by the task of developing a fledgling understanding within one’s new territory—in my case cultural geography—it is also incredibly exciting, as this new understanding is developed within the context and practice of one’s ‘home’ territory, and therefore creates a productive ‘methodological synthesis’ (Kincheloe 2001: 685). This develops into something of a third way of working—something that is perhaps neither geographic, nor graphic, but geo/graphic in its aims, methods, outlook and execution. Obviously much of my understanding of place has been underpinned by the conceptual approaches developed by geographers such as Massey (1994, 2005). However, my research and practice has developed in further ways through my engagement with cultural geography.

A geographer’s central aim is not just to represent place, but to explore, understand, and make sense of the ongoing, complex and relational production of place. The representational problem is therefore how to convey this, rather than representation being the sole aim itself, and I think it is this approach that goes some way to shift thinking about the potential of the role of designer from the somewhat dated position of designer as author (Rock 2002), to the more productive position of ‘designer as researcher’. For example, I have learnt much from social science’s embracing of non-traditional qualitative research methods within research, and the drive within cultural geography to explore these in relation to place. Such approaches have informed not only my understanding of what might constitute a legitimate and productive way of engaging with, and understanding place, but have also extended to the practice of making itself. In particular my somewhat traditional approach to research was challenged through my participation in the *EWG* workshop in Edinburgh. In turn, the inclusion of these experiential research methods opened up

the potential for a more embodied, 'hands on' approach to the design itself. This came to the fore through a physical engagement with materials in the form of prototyping, and was critical to fully developing an understanding of the form of the book as a temporal, three-dimensional space, one where the reader takes a physical, experiential role in its exploration.

From the outset of this research I identified 'pause' and 'process' as two key geographic concepts with which to frame my understanding of place. However, at that stage this decision was taken 'out of place', at my desk, through engagement with weighty geographical tomes, rather than the pavements. So, through the undertaking of this practice-led research, has my understanding of these terms changed; are the terms more meaningful to me now; do they remain specific or generic enough to define my own understanding of place; or, is place, and its representation, more than just pause and process?

My sense is that my understanding of the terms has changed over the course of the research. My idea of process in particular has developed from an abstract concept to a richer, more peopled proposition. It is a term that I think is flexible enough to cope with the complex, multi-faceted experience of place—it neither excludes too much through an over focused specificity, nor includes too little because of its abstract nature. It is a term that can adapt to the different approaches and outcomes that one might develop through the course of the geo/graphic design process. Process is also a term that contains, represents, and is constructed by, many of the encounters in place I have experienced through the course of this research; for example, the spontaneous connections and disconnections overheard within the *Hackney conversations* design test project; and, the circulation of people, goods and services revealed in the *Newsagents' windows* design test project. However, to associate the notion of process solely with the fleeting or momentary offers only one perspective. *Stuff*, *Old Town* and *Food Miles* offer alternative readings of place as process; *Stuff* offers a temporal view of the process and place of home through the practice of collecting and stockpiling; *Old Town* sites the physical exploration of place within historical narratives that are as much part of the process of Edinburgh's construction as the new parliament building is; and, *Food Miles* sites my experience of the present moment in place within a complex web of interrelated texts that draw on a range of issues from contemporary theory to local history.

I feel that many of the issues relating to the representation of place within print are problematic not only because of the perceived difficulty of dealing with elements of everyday life that are seen as ‘more than representational’, (Lorimer 2005) such as affect and emotion, but also because of this understanding of place as process; as polyphonic, and ongoing in nature. Because of these issues the type of representations that can adequately reflect place need to be rethought as re/presentations, as artefacts that to some extent remain ‘open’, that engage the reader, consciously or not, in the reconstruction and interpretation of place. As part of this process, the researcher is also always positioned within the research, and can offer it, not as the representation of ‘home’ within Hackney, for example, but as one re/presentation of Hackney that explores the notion of home through aspects of collection and memory. However, the process doesn’t stop here, when these design test projects are presented in lectures or discussed in workshops, they also go onto to feed into the ongoing construction and ‘process’ of Hackney itself.

In contrast to process, I have come to view the notion of pause as more productive in relation to the re/presentation of place, rather than in understanding or defining place itself. There is a danger inherent with a term such as pause that suggests the holding back of time, or a rose-tinted, nostalgic view of place. There is an element of this view in several of the probe returns that suggest that the pace of change and development in Hackney is somehow causing the ‘real’ Hackney to be lost. Whilst the Hackney chapter in this thesis acknowledges the importance of participants’ feelings about this, it is perhaps also important to acknowledge that stasis in relation to place is something of a mirage (Massey 1994: 3). Also, to only be able to ‘know’ place through a ‘pause’ or an extended time spent there negates a broad range of experiences of place, and perhaps comes a little too close to suggesting that there is one correct way of knowing ‘real’ place. My experience at *EWG*, and the consequent broadening out of my research methods to include more embodied, experiential practices was central to grounding this sense of the potential of going beyond the idea of ‘pause’ within practice. However, during the course of this research I feel I have explored and discovered place in a myriad of ways—from the immediate to the in-depth—and I don’t feel one necessarily precludes, or is preferable, to the other. So, unlike the notion of ‘process’, that revealed its flexibility through research and practice, ‘pause’ seems to have more limitations.

'Pause' has perhaps been more useful in relation to the translation of 'process' into print; for example, specifically the notion of 'freeze-framing' being used in single-page poster works such as *Hackney conversations* and *Newsagents' windows*; and, as part of the utilisation of pace and rhythm, and therefore temporality, within the design test projects that take a multi-page format. The notion of pause can also be used more generally within each design test project to frame them as offering the reader a momentary snapshot, or version of my experience of place, rather than an all-encompassing 'truth'.

The undertaking of such a wide range of design test projects using such a range of research methods has been vital to grounding my new found conceptual understanding about place within the reality of Hackney. Government agencies and the media normally offer two polarised views of Hackney; that it is a welcoming, vibrant place that celebrates cultural diversity; and, that it is a deprived inner city area overwhelmed with issues relating to drugs and violent crime. Whilst participants in probe returns referred to these issues, and evidence of both the positive and negative stereotypes were visible during my research, what I discovered was a far more complex place, one that I could only ever claim to 'know' in part. Richardson's (2000) notion of crystallisation might be a useful visual metaphor with regard to place. The idea of a crystal growing and developing more and more surfaces that continually reflect and refract everyday life and place in different ways seems appropriate both to my sense of Hackney and to Massey's notion of process.

However, it wasn't just the probe returns and my exploration on foot that developed my sense of Hackney, the process of design also contributed. For example, it was only through constructing the global geographical page numbering system within *Food Miles* that I really began to think about how far many of these business owners had travelled in order to make a new life. Through the process of interleaving related sections of the book and individual texts I began to realise just how many elements of place overlap, interlink, and are impossible to separate; that geographical borders, of any sort, in reality are porous. They conspire together to construct place in its uniqueness—like Massey's (1994) descriptions of Kilburn that are at once both local and global. Similarly, placing the hidden historical texts within the perforated French folds of the *Old Town* book reinforce the fact that places have histories and the past always resides in the present, even if it is not always immediately obvious.

Physical aspects of my journey also became clearer; through setting the text in *Food Miles* in such a way as to reference the south to north journey and the incredible directness of the old Roman road; and, through positioning the Ridley Road market section within the centre of the book, as a focal point of the road, with the 90° shift in the text revealing the turn I would take each time I left that stretch of Kingsland High Street to return to Hackney Downs train station. In *Stuff*, the importance of each of our 'autotopographies' that we construct in our own homes was reinforced as I covered images of precious mementos with protective glassine paper and tucked old photographs into envelopes. The practice of 'making' offers another method of 'slowing down' within the research process, enabling reflection on actions that may have been instinctive within the field. It is perhaps another way of retracing one's steps through the research, a type of analysis through design practice that, through its physicality, can offer clarifications, realisations and conclusions that may not have been obvious before.

9.3 Implications of the research

Undertaking this research as an individual was at times hugely frustrating and perhaps is one of the limitations of the study. This affected the study in two ways, one more practical than the other. The practical frustration and limitation was one of time and reach. Researching alone and undertaking a series of design test projects meant that my resources were, at times, stretched to the limit. It also meant that occasionally test projects that could have developed much further in terms of content, simply could not because of time constraints. For example, I would have liked to include more participants within *Stuff*, but the process of contacting, interviewing and analysing further responses would have taken far too long. I think this was partly also a frustration of working in an interdisciplinary way. At times I felt that I could be offering a 'meatier' piece of ethnographic work within some of the test projects. However, because the ultimate aim of the thesis was to develop the geo/graphic design process, rather than a theory about 'stuff' within Hackney homes, pragmatic decisions had to be taken about the amount of time spent developing and testing each aspect of the process.

The other limitation is perhaps the issue of subjectivity inherent in this type of practice-led research. I have developed the geo/graphic design process through reflecting on my approach to practice and this is clearly

informed by my own graphic design education and practice developed over the past eighteen years. I am aware that I enjoy working with typography, that I am not particularly comfortable creating forms of illustration other than photography, and that my sketchbooks often reveal a predominance of words and diagrams rather than more traditional sketches. Now, whilst I cannot change the experiences I have had that have led to my practice, I do think acknowledging it and attempting to test the process in a variety of ways goes some way to compensating for it. I also think that my practice has been challenged through the course of the research, and that some of the later work, post *EWG*, shows the development of a much more 'hands on' approach with materials. However, I also wonder if this perceived limitation is in some senses a positive. Most geographers, although unlikely to have received any formal design education, will be used to using type (if only to choose the font they wish to set their presentation in), and are probably used to using a camera. So perhaps my preferred 'raw materials' offer an example of the geo/graphic design process that is more approachable than if I were highlighting design test projects that featured incredibly complex, hand drawn illustrations. Indeed, many of the design interventions made are of a simple nature. For example, texts turned 90° to represent movements within space and texts hidden beneath folds in pages to reflect the hidden significance behind one's possessions. Yet the simplicity of these interventions belies the impact they can have within the pages of a book. Ultimately, the set of methods and criteria for evaluation are constructed so as to be broad enough, yet specific enough, to cope with a variety of styles and approaches.

Perhaps these two issues give some indication to what I might approach differently if I were to repeat the research. I might choose to undertake slightly fewer design test projects, and attempt to undertake at least one of those through some form of collaboration with a cultural geographer. Whilst I have undoubtedly benefited from the multidisciplinary make up of my supervisory team, in hindsight, it would have been particularly interesting to further expose my ideas of the geo/graphic design process in practice, with a geographer. This would not only perhaps reveal further strengths or weaknesses of the process, but would also offer an opportunity to develop further my thoughts on the productive site of research that is interdisciplinary in nature. In the future it could also be useful to trial a workshop with geographers, or geography students, who have had little experience of representing place through any media other

than text. Whilst they may initially be resistant to open their research and practice up to visual methods that they find unfamiliar or daunting, this unfamiliarity could perhaps induce a different but equally useful response. Similarly I think it would be useful to trial a workshop with graphic design students, to see how they respond to the parts of the process that are rooted more clearly within social science and cultural geography.

Hindsight and limitations aside I feel the outcomes of this research offer significant implications for both cultural geographers and graphic designers in relation to the understanding and representation of everyday life and place. The design test projects, and therefore the geo/graphic design process, offer geographers a clear indication that it is possible to engage with and reflect place in all its complexity, within print based work. This offers geographers disillusioned with a traditional medium an opportunity to re-evaluate its potential. My experience at *EWG* clarified this as an important contribution to debates on methods or practices of representation, for the majority of participants were focusing specifically on areas of newer technology such as sound and video. Whilst I am not suggesting these methods are somehow problematic or inferior, there does seem—perhaps because of the debates about non-representational theory—a move to represent place without the use of language; to accept that place is ‘unsayable or unwrite-able’ (Laurier & Philo 2006: 354–5). However the geo/graphic design process offers geographers an invitation to view typography and design as enabling ‘language in performance’ (Mermoz 2002: 5), and in helping address the perceived divide between theory and practice (Nash 2000: 657) offers potential for engaging with text based representations of place that can complement some of the recent methodological developments within cultural geography.

Within graphic design I feel that the research makes a range of contributions in relation to typography, the page, and the book; the productive relationship between form and content; and, the repositioning of ‘designer as researcher’ as opposed to ‘designer as author’ (Rock 2002) or ‘designer as reader’ (Mermoz 2004a: 37). The revisiting and testing of Mermoz’s (1995, 1998, 2002 & Mau & Mermoz 2004) ideas in relation to working ‘at the level of the text’ have enabled the design test projects to explore this idea of ‘language in performance’ fully, and by the same token, dispute Ingold’s (2007) theories relating to the page as a place of passivity and silence. This approach enables a focus on the relationship between

form and content, within the context of communication, rather than the development of work that is driven by visual references to certain -isms or styles. To many designers this may seem an obvious conclusion, but it seems that it is one that is rarely stated explicitly.

One of the most interesting disciplinary implications of this research is the reframing of the potential role of the graphic designer within academia. Debates about the 'designer as author' were rarely satisfactory in their conclusions; often misinterpreted; and, based their original argument on auteur theory, which is no longer used in contemporary film criticism (Rock, 2002). However, repositioning the 'designer as researcher' reflects a position where the designer is generating work in which they may take on the role of 'author', in terms of designing the research project and articulating the findings. However, this authorial role is one that is driven by the broader aims of the research itself, rather than a concern for adopting a personal visual style. Graphic design has much more to offer than style; indeed, I have found that the process of design, with its parallels to Seidel's (1998) 'noticing, collecting and thinking' method of analysis, can be used productively within research in general, as it is driven by the same principles of action and reflection. However, for many designers, their research and design process is learned by trial and error, and they remain unaware of the rich body of similar traditions available within social sciences. The process of design often remains instinctive and unquestioned, as if it were some kind of 'black art', practiced by the select few that have been given the gift of 'design thinking'.

Swanson (1994) also sees opportunities for graphic design in this respect.

If the word language is used in the broadest sense, then language analysis is at the core of much of the humanities and social sciences. Design, and graphic design in particular, is in the position to be at the center of this study (Swanson 1994: 63).

Indeed, Rochfort (2002: 159) suggests that design occupies a 'third area between the humanities and science' and that 'the designerly way of knowing involves a combination of knowledge and skills from both science and the humanities'. Swanson goes on to suggest that designers don't recognise their own position within this interesting field (Swanson 1994: 59), and I suspect this is because the majority of undergraduates studying graphic design are more concerned with developing a professional portfolio

in order to achieve employment, than exploring the potential of graphic design to contribute to debates that exceed its own borders. A contributory factor to this mindset is perhaps the fact that much design education focuses on teaching ‘without a research base’ and in undergraduate programmes ‘the understanding and application of research is often very different from academic research’ with it being generally applied solely at the start of a design project rather than throughout (Yee 2007: 11). This view has recently been echoed within a discussion thread on the PHD-Design list (2010), with contributions from academics in Australia, the United States, Canada and South Africa. I feel graphic design undergraduate and postgraduate education could benefit from being exposed to both traditional and non-traditional qualitative research methods used within social science. Engaging in such interdisciplinary work would assist in dispelling the notion that theory is ‘an expendable adjunct, grafted onto practice’ (Mermoz 1995: np).

Swanson states that:

Design should be about meaning and how meaning can be created. Design should be about the relationship of form and communication (Swanson 1994: 59).

‘Meaning’ can obviously be derived from an infinite variety of content, and like cultural geographers who take a research project through from inception to representation, graphic designers should have the confidence to do the same; to act as ‘designer as researcher’, and to develop work that is driven by content and contexts from outside of design. Currently, there is work within graphic design that, to some extent, employs this strategy, however, much of this is undertaken outside of the academy and with little articulation of methods and findings, or analysis of what has been visualised. Often it is simply a visual rendering of the research findings of others offered up as information graphic ‘eye candy’ (see for example McCandless 2009).

The development of the geo/graphic design process is the direct result of an interdisciplinary research trajectory. I have engaged with a rich body of qualitative methodological traditions and cultural geographic theory from which I have learned, but to which I have also brought my own *subjective* understanding of the communicative potential of graphic design. In this

context *subjectivity* is that which relates to one's subject specific approach, and is in addition to the more traditional notion of subjectivity that relates to one's personal background and beliefs.

Adopting the role of graphic designer as researcher I have engaged with the research, understanding and representation of place through this new geo/graphic approach. At the outset of this research the central question was can print based graphic design be profitably utilised within geographic debates about the understanding and representation of place? The design test projects developed, and the articulation of the geo/graphic design process, confirm this to be the case. I would hope that through dissemination of this research via networks such as *EWG*, and journals such as *Cultural Geographies*, cultural geographers will be made aware of the potential of print based re/presentations of place and that it is possible to engage with written texts beyond the conventional academic journal format.

Embracing the traditions of qualitative research within social science, and approaching research in this interdisciplinary way, positions graphic design as engaged with more than the visual or the superficial, and as capable of developing work that has resonance beyond its disciplinary boundaries, across the academy in general. It enables the repositioning of graphic design from a service-led, communicative tool to 'an instrument for the production and communication of knowledge' (Mermoz 2006: 77). I would hope that through dissemination of this research via groups such as *The Design Research Society* and journals such as *Design Issues* I will contribute to the ongoing development of the research territory by citing the position of graphic designer as researcher as one that can bring a positive, disciplinary-led *subjectivity*, in the form of a graphic design perspective, to the process of interdisciplinary research.

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Appendix

Cultural geographers' recent interest in media such as film or sound as forms of communication through which to convey relational versions of place, and the processes through which place is continually produced, reflects their perception that the conventional representational format of the printed word is limited in this respect. In response, this interdisciplinary research set out to develop and test the geo/graphic design process as a way of opening up the communicative possibilities of print within the research, understanding and representation of place. The previous four chapters have articulated the practice-led research process undertaken to achieve this, and formed conclusions in relation to the individual aspects of researching place; the place of analysis; and, the place of design. However, these individual conclusions need to be drawn together within this final chapter in order to clearly articulate the specifics of the geo/graphic design process, and to develop a set of criteria with which one can evaluate the success of work developed using it.

A guide to the geo/graphic design process and criteria for its evaluation

The aim of the geo/graphic design process is that it provides an accessible, flexible, yet rigorous and robust framework that can be used by a variety of researchers or practitioners in a variety of contexts. Therefore the findings are presented here without reference to the specific design test projects, or to Hackney, rather they are set out as generic methods and criteria that function as a process for engaging with and re/presenting place and everyday life in a productive way, whatever the context of the investigation. The methods are also set out privileging neither the academic background of the geographer nor the designer, hence some readers may be familiar with some parts of the process. However, as this interdisciplinary research has taken a holistic view with regard to the understanding and representation of place, my sense is that to separate the findings along disciplinary lines would be to erect the kind of borders that I have been intent on crossing.

The following twelve points are essentially a guide to using the geo/graphic design process. Functioning as something of a manifesto, some points are broad in their emphasis, perhaps covering elements such as the kind of open, flexible 'mindset' one needs to adopt when undertaking research of this type, others are more specific, offering advice in relation to form, content and formats. The guide to the process is written in a way that mirrors the construction the final three chapters of the thesis. This

could suggest that it is a linear undertaking, however, many of the points, particularly those relating to analysis, need to be considered throughout the process, not solely at the point of having gathered data and making the transition from data to re/presentation.

Explore widely

Use a range of research methods to develop your understanding and experience of place; adopt the role of the ‘bricoleur’. Use all of your senses; engage with place in an experiential, immediate way. Compare, contrast, and complement this type of exploration with traditional documentary and secondary research methods.

Don’t be afraid to improvise

Throughout the research and practice don’t be afraid to improvise, ‘follow your nose’, capitalise on chance, or suspend your judgment so as to proceed without a hypothesis. Productive research methods and questions are sometimes only found through the process of the research and an engagement with place.

Make productive use of the space between disciplines

Interdisciplinary research offers a productive positioning of the researcher between two disciplines. Use this creatively; don’t be afraid to adapt unfamiliar, unknown methods, from the position of your familiar, known territory.

Seek a range of perspectives

Your own perception of place is valid, but go further and seek a range of perspectives through participatory research methods. Consider offering participants tasks that engage them in creative ways, thus enabling them to develop a sense of co-creation with regard to the research. Be prepared to expect the unexpected in the results of such tasks.

Employ the processes of reflection and analysis continually

From beginning to end reflection and analysis are the generative processes that drive the research and practice forward. Use different tools at different points in the process; develop a set that can capture a range of types of reflection—from the immediate, to that which is undertaken after a period of time. Use tools that work for you. These could be sketchbooks, journals, video diaries, drawings, blogs, voice recordings, or something else. What is important is that the reflection and analysis is captured and then progresses the research. Also make sure your reflection moves from the private to public domains through discussion and forms of public presentation.

See analysis in its broadest sense

Understand that analysis does not always equate to a very narrow, positivist definition often associated with quantitative studies. For example, documentation isn't simply about recording place; it can be used as a tool for analysis, whether using traditional geographic methods of mapping or visual ethnographic methods of photography. Prototyping could also be seen as a form of analysis through design. Be more inclusive in your definition of, and approach to, analysis.

Slow down

Take your time; the adoption of research methods that slow one down, such as walking or writing, can be useful. The pacing of such methods offers time for reflection and analysis.

Develop a productive relationship between form and content

Read, understand, and analyse your content; develop ideas that can translate into the graphic space of the page. Work 'at the level of the text' in order to generate typographic and design interventions that communicate the content and context of the research.

Explore the possibilities of format

Further develop the form and content relationship through an engagement with format. This is the first visual reference point the reader is offered with which to begin to form an understanding about this re/presentation of everyday life and place. Create the impact or sense of place that you want through possibilities in terms of scale, single and multi-page documents, or traditional and non-traditional formats and/or bindings. Put yourself in place and think about how to translate your own bodily moves into the form of the book. Think of the book in particular as a three dimensional space that engenders a physical participation on the part of the reader.

Explore the possibilities of materials

A printed book is handled and therefore its tactile quality plays a huge part in its reception by the reader. Think beyond the pile of white A4 paper on your desk. Think beyond traditional paper even—anything that can be printed on or bound within pages is fair game. However, don't feel that A4 papers and laser printers preclude the design of an interactive, engaging piece of work—low-tech doesn't necessarily equal low production values. Again, the idea is key—refer back to the form and content relationship at all times.

Induce temporality through design

The immediacy of a poster or single page is in contrast to the book which delivers its contents over time. Think about temporality in relation to form and content, format, materials, and ideas of process and pause. Across the pages of a book your design interventions create pace and rhythm, creating not only a stimulating visual flow for the reader, but also triggering two different types temporal engagement. Think about the reader's physical interaction with the book, design interventions can slow them down or change the pace of their usual reading experience. After creating a physical pause, try and create a further pause in the reader's mind, through design interventions that provoke reflection in relation to their own understandings of place as re/presented within the book.

Abandon all ideas of mimesis

You will never be able to record and represent everyday life and place in all its complexity. Shift your thinking from ideas of representation to re/presentations, where the design interventions create a space of interpretation and imagination in which the reader is an active participant in the work. Consider the tactic of montage writing to develop texts that are multi-faceted and multi-linear. Engage the reader's participation through navigational design strategies that don't just plot a linear route from A to B, but offer choices of direction. However, beware of making too many typographic interventions and offering the reader a 'confused presentation', rather than a 'presentation of confusion'. In all of these choices be aware of issues of subjectivity, interpretation and editing, but engage with them proactively to craft a re/presentation of place that sustains the interest of the reader.

Criteria for 'validation'

Whilst these twelve elements of the geo/graphic design process offer the researcher or practitioner the key points of the framework, they don't offer a set of criteria with which to 'validate' the success, or otherwise of work created through the process. Here the word 'work' is used as a catch all term for any type of printed graphic design, or written content, developed through the geo/graphic design process. This set of criteria need to be utilised as part of the ongoing set of generative reflective and analytical tools developed by the researcher during the course of the research and practice, not solely at the end of the process in relation to a finished piece of design. That way questions can be asked not just of the design aspect of the process, but of the wider research methods and content also.

Does the work contribute to an understanding of place and everyday life?

Does it reveal a new or different reading of the place in question?
Does it add to, or reframe, one's thinking about everyday life and place?

Is the work 'believable'?

Does it portray aspects everyday life and place in such a way that one can sense it has a 'truthfulness' about it, or a sense of a 'reality'?

Does the work reflect a variety of perspectives or contributors?

Does it evidence an attempt to offer a reading of aspects of everyday life and place that go beyond the researcher's personal opinion?

Are the subjective authorial and editorial decisions taken with an understanding of the researcher's position within the work?

Is the researcher aware of issues of subjectivity? Is their position within the research and work understood and openly visible to the reader?

Does the work engage the reader?

In basic terms, is it interesting? Would it catch the reader's attention and imagination and encourage them to read on?

Does the work sustain that engagement?

Aside from the immediate interest, does it sustain the reader throughout its duration? Does it offer the possibility of an interactive, multi-sensory space of participation that rewards continued engagement?

Do the design decisions taken maximize the form/content relationship?

Does the visual form appropriately reflect the content and context of the work? Has the researcher considered all aspects of design—in basic terms, format, typography, layout, and materials—in order to productively engage the reader with both form and content? Does the work offer the reader an experience of the complexities of everyday life and place that refrains from descending into a 'confused presentation'?

Does the work embody a productive synthesis of theory and practice?

Does it evidence new ways of engaging with and re/presenting everyday life and place, developed through a holistic engagement with both theory and practice? Has the interdisciplinary approach enabled the researcher to utilise their new position and understanding to productive effect?

Several of the elements of the geo/graphic design process and evaluative criteria reflect those set out by Richardson (2000) in relation to experimental ethnographic writing—in particular those relating to understanding and ‘truthfulness’. Fewer of them relate to Garland’s (1996) criteria. Indeed, the balance of the elements of the geo/graphic design process and the evaluative criteria are not weighted towards the practicalities or possibilities of design, as this is a process that needs to start with an engagement with place itself. As an interdisciplinary study, the process offers both geographers and graphic designers insights into this new and productive geo/graphic synthesis of theory and practice from both disciplines. Some elements of the geo/graphic design process are indeed common to both disciplines, for example, the notion that one should explore widely at the outset of research. In fact, this could perhaps be said to underpin, as do some of the other methods—analysis and reflection for example—research in general. This should not be seen as a failing of the geo/graphic design process, but rather as confirmation that the process is rigorous, and contains the type of common features which distinguish it as research (McNiff & Whitehead 2006: 8).

However, by drawing on such a wide range of methods and influences in the testing and development of the geo/graphic design process—through the stance of the bricoleur—the process goes further than traditional articulations of qualitative research design that tend to be bound by one methodological tradition. In particular, it is the latter half of the process that introduces the elements of form, format, and material into the ways one can both understand and re/present place that extends this process beyond the conventions of traditional academic text based forms of representation. It is at this point in particular that geographers are encouraged to see print as a medium that has huge potential with regard to the understanding and re/presentation of everyday life and place; and, to realise the impact design decisions relating to form, typography, and materials can make in relation to the readers engagement and interaction.

